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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

WANG MENG'S "A YOUNG MAN": ITS ANTI-BUREAUCRATIC THEME AND CONTROVERSY

BY

AH CHOO ANG

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled WANG MENG'S "A YOUNG MAN": ITS ANTI-BUREAUCRATIC THEME AND CONTROVERSY submitted by AH CHOO ANG in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in COMPARATIVE LITERATURE.

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IN MEMORY

OF

My Dear Parents

ABSTRACT

Whether literature should be written according to the prescriptions of Socialist Realism or whether it should faithfully reflect the contradictions in existing social reality has been one of the focal points of debate in contemporary Chinese literary history, particularly during the Hundred Flowers period (mid-1956 to mid-1957). Wang Meng's (b. 1934) short story, "A Young Man Arrives at the Organization Department," which was written during this period, offers a critique of bureaucratism in a "socialist" state and represents a deviation from the orthodox method of Socialist Realism. This story reflects the contradictions between the idealists and the degenerate bureaucrats. It also exposes the contradictions that are inherent in the excessive centralism and commandism of a "socialist" state, an organizational structure based on the Soviet model of development. There was general disagreement about Wang Meng's story among various interest groups, each interpreting the story to their own advantage. The debate on the positive and negative impact of the story on the "socialist cause" lasted until the onslaught of the Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957-1958. This thesis is a case study of a work of critical realism and the controversy caused in part by ideological differences. It shows how a conscientious writer can be unjustly treated by the political establishment in China.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BJRB	*Beijing Ribao* (Beijing Daily) 北京日报
BJWY	*Beijing Wenyi* (Beijing Literature and Art) 北京文艺
CB	*Current Background*. Hongkong: American Consulate General.
GMRB	*Guangming Ribao* (Guangming Daily) 光明日报
JPRS	*Joint Publications Research Service*, U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C.
RMRB	*Renmin Ribao* (People's Daily) 人民日报
RMWX	*Renmin Wenxue* (People's Literature) 人民文学
SHWX	*Shanghai Wenxue* (Shanghai Literature) 上海文学
SW	*Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*
WHB	*Wenhuibao* (Wenhui Daily) 文汇报
WYB	*Wenyibao* (Literary Gazette) 文艺报
WYXX	*Wenyi Xuexi* (Literary Study) 文艺学习

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

"Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend," proclaimed Mao Zedong in April 1956. This proclamation was to be followed by the Hundred Flowers Movement from mid-1956 to mid-1957. During this short period of relaxation, Chinese writers were able to enjoy a certain degree of intellectual freedom. They were allowed to write on a variety of subject matters and to depart from the orthodox method of Socialist Realism. In the initial phase of the Movement, Chinese intellectuals were invited by the Chinese Communist Party to criticize the errors of Party cadres. The criticism quickly spread from academic matters to Party policies, and eventually led to the denunciation of the Party itself, which was beyond the tolerance of the Party. An abrupt reversal of the Party's policy turned the Hundred Flowers Movement into the Anti-Rightist Campaign in June 1957.

During the Hundred Flowers Movement, many writers responded to the Party's call to criticize the bureaucratism inherent in the Party. Most of the older writers were reluctant to "bloom," particularly those who had been persecuted during the Yan'an era in the 1940s. However, some of the younger writers, while accepting the Party leadership, dared to criticize the malpractices of Party functionaries. Young writers such as Wang Meng, Liu Binyan (b. 1925) and Li Qing (b. date unknown) criticize bureaucracy in the 1950s in various literary works. Among these works of social criticism, Wang Meng's "A Young Man Arrives at the Organization Department" (September 1956) received the widest

attention. The story reflects the bureaucratic practices in a district Organization Department through the experience of Lin Zhen, a young cadre. It not only mirrors the contradictions between older bureaucrats and younger cadres, but also reflects the problem of the existing social system modeled after the Soviet organizational system. During this period, Lin Binyan's "At the Construction Site of the Bridge" and "The Inside News of the Newspaper," and Li Qing's "The Degeneration of Ma Duan" are also comparable to Wang Meng's story in presenting an anti-bureaucratic theme.

Obviously, *A Young Man* was influenced by the Soviet novel, *The Newcomer: The Manager of an MTS and the Chief Agronomist* (1954) by Galina Nikolayeva. Nikolayeva presents an anti-bureaucratic theme through the heroine, Nastya, who successfully overcomes the bureaucratic practices in a machine-and-tractor station. Nastya's "fighting spirit" came to be known by Chinese readers as "Nastya-spirit." Wang Meng uses his hero Lin Zhen to emulate the "Nastya-spirit" in combating the bureaucratic inertia in the Organization Department.

The criticism of bureaucratism as reflected in Wang Meng's *A Young Man* aroused controversy among Chinese critics. In general, these critics based their arguments on questions arising from two ideological viewpoints: whether literature should critically reflect social reality as in the tradition of nineteenth-century Western literature; or whether it should portray reality in its revolutionary development as in the new convention of Socialist Realism.

When the Hundred Flowers Movement turned into the Anti-Rightist

Campaign, Wang Meng and other writers were stigmatized as "rightist" and his story as a "poisonous weed." It was not until 1979 that Wang Meng and some other "rightists," as well as his story were rehabilitated.

This thesis uses Wang Meng's "A Young Man Arrives at the Organization Department" as a case study. It examines why and how the story was written and the subsequent controversy. Chapter 2 begins with the life and works of Wang Meng. The techniques he employed in some stories are also briefly discussed. Chapter 3 deals with the anti-bureaucratic theme and character development in the story. Chapter 4 discusses the controversy aroused by the story and the consequences of the Anti-Rightist Campaign on the author and the story. The thesis concludes with the evaluation of the story in light of modern Chinese literary history.

CHAPTER 2

The Path of Wang Meng: Life and Works

"A land stretching 8,000 *li*;
a life of thirty stormy years"
(Guguo baqian li, fengyun sanshi nian)

Wang Meng became one of China's most prominent writers after the Chinese Communist's victory in 1949. He became famous in 1956 at the age of twenty-two, when he published the story "A Young Man Arrives at the Organization Department"[1] (The original title of this story had been changed to "The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department" by Qin Zhaoyang (b. 1920), the editor of *People's Literature*).[2] This story was in response to the Party's call during the Hundred Flowers Movement (mid-1956 to mid-1957) to offer a critique of bureaucratic functionaries within the Communist Party. When this movement was abruptly put to an end and followed by the Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957-1958), Wang Meng's brief literary career was shattered, and he was to live in disgrace for more than twenty years. After his rehabilitation in 1979, he re-emerged as a prolific writer who has reached high literary achievement. Since 1979, he has served as Vice-Chairman of the Chinese Writers' Association and as chief editor of some important literary magazines. He became a member of the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee in 1985, and was subsequently appointed as Minister of Culture in May 1986 and remained in that position until September 1989.

Wang Meng's life and career are closely tied to political events in China since 1949, especially the Hundred Flowers Movement and the

Anti-Rightist Campaign. These two events brought him both humiliation and honor at different stages. Generally, Wang Meng's life can be divided into three stages: childhood and youth, from 1934 to 1956; from the Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957 to his rehabilitation in 1979; and his reappearance since 1979. Wang Meng's literary career and achievement may also be divided into two stages: from the 1950s to the 1960s and from 1978 to the present.

Childhood and Youth (1934-1956)

Wang Meng was born in Beijing (it was known as Beiping from 1927 to 1949) on October 15, 1934 at a time when his parents were college students. His ancestral home is Nanpi County of Cangzhou District in Hebei Province. He lived in Nanpi County until 1937. When the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) broke out, his whole family moved to Beijing. He attended a kindergarten which was attached to Xiangshan Ciyou College in Beijing. In 1940, at the age of six, he enrolled in a primary school which was attached to the Beijing Normal School. In 1945, he passed the entrance examination of Pingmin Private Secondary School one year before his graduation from primary school. According to Wang Meng, he chose a private secondary school because public secondary schools required a graduation certificate which he did not have. It was also in that year that the Japanese surrendered. Like many other children, Wang Meng was very excited, and felt a sense of national pride. He enthusiastically welcomed the arrival of the "Nationalist army," but he soon became disillusioned with the

Nationalist Government. It was probably because of this that in 1946, he established ties with underground Communist Party members, and began to read the works of Karl Marx and Mao Zedong, and revolutionary Soviet and Chinese literary works such as *How the Steel Was Tempered*,[3] "The White-Haired Girl,"[4] "The Clapper Songs of Li Youcai"[5] and *The Heroes of Lüliang*.[6]

Like many revolutionary Chinese youths who had grown up in the 1940s and 1950s, and had experienced tremendous and turbulent changes in society, Wang Meng was politically mature at a very young age. In 1948, he joined the Chinese Communist Party at the age of thirteen, and involved himself in the "liberation" struggle. In January 1949, Beiping was "liberated." In 1950, he was assigned to work as a "small cadre" in the Youth League of the Third Beijing Municipal Workers' committee. In 1956, he assumed the responsibility of a deputy secretary in a factory.

Life After the Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957-1979)

In June 1957, an abrupt reversal in policy turned the Hundred Flowers Movement into the Anti-Rightist Campaign. It was followed by the "rectification" of those who criticized the Party, rather than the "rectification" of the Party itself. Wang Meng's *A Young Man*, being critical of Party functionaries, was singled out as a "poisonous weed."[7] According to Wang Meng, it was because of the exaggeration of the Anti-Rightist Campaign that he was attacked.[8] However, he was "never publicly denounced as a 'rightist' probably because of Mao's

intervention."[9] He was first sent to the Beijing countryside to "reform" himself through physical labor in 1958. At the end of 1961, Wang Meng was "uncapped,"[10] and in September 1962, he was assigned to teach modern Chinese literature at the Chinese Department of Beijing Normal College. The literary climate at that time had been relatively relaxed, and Wang Meng again took up his pen and wrote two stories in that year. But literary journals were very reluctant to accept literary works of "uncapped rightists."[11] In this circumstance, Wang Meng volunteered to go to some remote countryside to "temper" himself, and to "reform his own thought," in order to produce "new works."[12] The place he chose was Xinjiang.

In December 1963, he and his family arrived in Xinjiang. Initially, he was assigned to do some editorial work in the Xinjiang branch of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles. Soon, the political climate began to tighten up, and since Wang Meng was a "target" of the Anti-Rightist Campaign, the responsible personnel of the Literary and Art Circles had no choice but to send Wang Meng to the countryside to let him "experience life" and "reform" himself.[13] From 1965 to 1971, and therefore also during Cultural Revolution,[14] Wang Meng worked in a commune known as Bayandai in Yili District in Xinjiang. He engaged himself in physical labor in the field, and made himself become a "genuine" peasant. As one young Xinjiang man said, "I had no idea that brother Wang was a writer, I only knew he was a peasant."[15] During this period, he had also once assumed the duties of a deputy brigade leader. Living among Uigur peasants, Wang Meng was able to establish close and harmonious relationships with them, especially with

Ahbudureheman and Heliqihan, an old Uigur couple, whom Wang Meng and his family lived with for six years. It was also during that period that Wang Meng acquired a good knowledge of the Uigur language. He is not only able to communicate freely in Uigur language, but also translate Uigur literature into the Han language.

In 1971, after spending six years in Bayandai Commune, Wang Meng was sent to the "May 7 Cadre School"[16] for two years. In 1973, he was transferred to the Xinjiang Autonomous Cultural Bureau to work as a translator and an editor. In that year, he translated a famous Uigur story, "Surging on the Yili River."[17] From 1975 till his return to Beijing in 1979, he worked in the Xinjiang branch of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles.

Wang Meng admits that if it had not been for the Anti-Rightist Campaign, he would not have gone to Xinjiang. Nevertheless, he states that he has never regretted the sixteen years he spent there. Having lived in Xinjiang for sixteen years, Wang Meng has maintained an emotional attachment to the place and the people, especially the peasants in Bayandai Commune, who had given him support and encouragement, warmth and consolation when he was in difficulty. In the words of Wang Meng, "hundreds of thousands of poor peasants were my bosom friends."[18] Indeed, he has won the friendship and respect of the Xinjiang people. It is a place which he has never forgotten and will never forget, and he now regards it as his second "hometown."[19] Wang Meng has said that he is glad to have had the opportunity to "experience life" there; it greatly broadened his horizon and enabled him to have a better understanding of the relationship between the

inner lands and the border regions, and between the Han and other ethnic minorities in China. Evidently, his experience in Xinjiang has become a valuable source of his literary creation. As Wang Meng says, his life in Xinjiang cannot be simply regarded as an "exile."[20] Hefeels that what he has gained is still more than he has lost.[21]

Reappearance in the Political Arena since 1979

In 1979, many writers labelled as "rightists" during the Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957-1958 were rehabilitated,[22] and Wang Meng was one of them. After his return from political oblivion in 1979, Wang Meng has served as Vice-Chairman of the Chinese Writers' Association and a member of the Communist Party's Central Committee. He assumed the position of a chief editor of *People's Literature* until 1986. From 1986 on, he has served as the chief editor of *Chinese Literature* (an English journal). In May, 1986, he was appointed Minister of Culture. Wang Meng was not the first artist to head the Ministry of Culture in the People's Republic of China. Before him, Mao Dun (1896-1981), a prominent May Fourth writer, held the position from the 1950s to the early 1960s. Wang Meng's rapid ascent to such a prominent position within a decade is due to more than just his artistic achievement. There were some additional factors that added to Wang's appointment: before 1949, Wang Meng had already become a Party member, and had actively participated in underground political work; after 1949, he had worked in the Communist Youth League in Beijing. This political record certainly enhanced Wang Meng's political

credentials to assume that post. Moreover, he was only fifty-two, an age which is considered young in China, yet politically mature enough to hold a high-ranking position. Another reason for Wang Meng's rapid promotion, as Richard Kraus observes, was "the Communist Party's desire to show that the Hundred Flowers policy [was] once again valid and that the thousands of artists and other intellectuals who had been disgraced between 1957 and the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 [were] once more a part of the mainstream of China's cultural life."[23] It was apparently the Party's intention to bridge the gap between the Party leadership, the artists and other intellectuals who had not been on good terms with the Party since the Yan'an era in the early 1940s. Thus, the appointment of Wang Meng as Minister of Culture was seen perhaps to help ease this tension. Wang Meng took office as the Minister of Culture and served until his resignation in early September,[24] after the Tian An Men Incident of June 4, 1989. Since then, there has been no news of him.

Early Works (1953-1962)

Wang Meng began his literary career in 1953. His first work, the novel *Long Live Youth* (Qingchun wansui), presents a straightforward narrative about a group of girls in the graduating class of a Beijing high school. The life of the students, though vividly portrayed, gives the work a natural, yet naive touch due to the students' optimism and idealism. The novel was written in 1953 but was not published until 1979.[25] An excerpt of the novel, entitled *A Golden Diary* (Jinse de

riji) was published in *Beijing Daily* on September 30, 1956. Parts of the novel were also serialized in *Wenhui Daily* in 1957.[26] According to Wang Meng, both Xiao Yemu (1918-1970) (a writer, and the then editor of Chinese Youth Press) and Xiao Yin (b. 1915-1983) (a writer and literary critic) had high regard for *Long Live Youth* at that time. It was already scheduled to appear as a single volume; however, because of the intense criticism aroused by the author's *A Young Man* during the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the subsequent "punishment" that had fallen on him, the novel did not make its appearance until 1979.[27]

Wang Meng's first short story, "Little Bean" (1955),[28] portrays how a little girl uncovers the counter-revolutionary activities of her father and her "uncle" in order to demonstrate her loyalty to the nation. His second short story, "Spring Festival" (1956)[29] is about a dejected university student going home during the Spring Festival holidays in the hope of gaining understanding from his best friend, a female schoolmate. From the friend, he learns of the success and meaningful life of his other friends. He finally becomes inspired and tries to shake off his self-pity. The third story, "A Young Man Arrives at the Organization Department" was his most controversial work.[30] The technique of *A Young Man* is not as distinguished as its content. It is a piece of realism with third person narrative. The depiction of the relationship between the newcomer, Lin Zhen and the married woman, Zhao Huiwen, who works in the same department, imbues the story with a certain emotional intensity. Through the experience of Lin Zhen, the story reflects a factually existing Chinese reality, and the problem of bureaucratism. It originally was Wang Meng's

intention to offer a gentle criticism of the work style of the Party cadres; unexpectedly, it brought him political misfortune and influenced his life and career after the Anti-Rightist Campaign. After the Campaign, he managed to publish three short stories: "Winter Rain" in 1957,[31] and "The Eyes"[32] and "Night Rain" in 1962.[33]

Among Wang Meng's early fiction, "Night Rain" is worth noting for its technique, which is more sophisticated than other stories written before it. The story depicts an eighteen year-old educated peasant girl who is so concerned about the agriculture in her village that she finally decides to stay and work for the production team in the commune instead of marrying a worker in the city. In this story, the depiction of night rain is vivid and moving. The author uses onomatopoeia such as *xixi suosuo*, *dididada* and *bataer* to describe the sound of the rain, *zhisha* for the cry of birds, and *buteng* for the movement of the birds. These colorful and tuneful words or phrases convey a sense of intimacy and portray a delightful pastoral scene. Wang Meng's observation of nature and his psychological description of the heroine's yearning for the rain to water the crops in a drought season are a good demonstration of his artistic sensitivity. The story was also an early manifestation of his recent artistic experimentation, for example, the use of the so-called "stream-of-consciousness"[34] technique to depict the psychological movement of character, and the weaving of clusters of colorful words and phrases to describe scenes and actions. However, with the exception of one or two stories, Wang Meng's early works are known for their ideological content rather than their techniques.

Works and Artistic Achievement in Post-Mao Era

After a long spell of silence, Wang Meng re-emerged in 1979 with a vast literary output. Although he had not published any works since 1962, he was not totally "blank" in literary creation after the Anti-Rightist Campaign, as many people thought. From 1972 to 1978, he had intermittently written a novel (in draft form), "The Scenery on this Side." However, the novel has not yet appeared. According to Wang Meng, the impact of life on him after his reappearance was so intense that he had to resort to novellas or short stories to duly reflect the changes in society as well as in life, and therefore he hardly has time to finalize the draft of the novel.[35] However, some portions of it were published in *Xinjiang Literature and Art* in 1978,[36] and in *Orient* in 1981.[37] Interestingly, this novel spans the 1960s, filling the void of Wang Meng's literary creation in that period. For instance, of the portions published in the *Orient*, the first section is set in 1962, the second, third, and fourth in 1963, and the fifth in 1964. This novel reflects the natural conditions and social customs of Uigur peasants in Yili District in Xinjiang, where Wang Meng had spent six to seven years. Wang Meng has also written a series of short stories which contain a rich variety of life of the Xinjiang people such as "The Anecdotes of Section Chief Maimaiti: 'Black Humor' of the Uigurs,"[38] "The God of Song,"[39] "The Story of a Brigade, a Secretary, a Wild Cat and one Half of a Chopstick."[40]

Of the stories written about Xinjiang people, "The Anecdotes of Section Chief Maimaiti" is particularly interesting in that it depicts

a Xinjiang Uigur named Maimaiti, a poetaster and petty official in the cultural bureaucracy who has been time and again denied membership in the Writers' Union, thus failing to achieve recognition as a writer. During the Cultural Revolution, the Red Guards confusedly accuse him as a wicked writer and brutally beat him. However, this cruel treatment does not affect Maimaiti's sense of humor. He jokes that the masses have finally "recognized" him as a writer. After going through several torturous blackly humorous "trials" by the Red Guards, he is exonerated after the fall of the "Gang of Four." Disapproving of the tear-jerking "wound" literature,[41] he tries every means to get his wry Cultural Revolution novel published. This story, to a certain extent, reflects Wang Meng's perception of life in recent years. Having himself suffered unjust treatment, he tries to use satire and humor as his weapons to attack the injustice in society. And having lived in a difficult situation in the past two decades, he now discovers "humor as an essential element of existence" and "absurd laughter" as a kind of "protest against an absurd existence."[42]

Although Wang Meng has written a good number of works which are still critical of the "socialist" reality, the targets of his criticism have shifted. Instead of criticizing the malpractices of responsible cadres, he now presents them as victims of the Cultural Revolution. Only a few stories reflect the bureaucratic privileges enjoyed by high-ranking cadres. The criticism he presents in this type of story is milder than that of his *A Young Man* some twenty years ago. For instance, the story, "A Fervent Wish"[43] describes a cadre disgraced during the Cultural Revolution and reinstated after the fall of the

"Gang of Four"; however, he quickly forgets his ideals and indulges himself in the enjoyment of luxury and privilege, thus alienating himself from the barber who had befriended him and saved him when he was badly wounded by the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution. In this story, the criticism of this cadre is one of admonition rather than exposure — a characteristic of Wang Meng's recent fiction. After he himself had experienced disgrace for more than twenty years, he has now become more accommodating to circumstantial reality:

> I have come to understand and stress fair play, forgiveness, tolerance and patience, to stress stability and unity. In the acrimony there is warmth, in the fierce sarcasm understanding and behind the bitterness a fervent expectation. I have come to understand that people must have ideals and that ideals cannot be realized overnight. I know too that using literature to influence life is easier than solid, hard work. That is why my writing now lays stress on stimulating my readers, on encouraging and consoling them, rather than on just exposing contradictions and forcing resolutions of social and politics. . . . My hatred too has its limits. The control of this hatred is an essential condition for sustaining and developing stability.[44]

Wang Meng seems to be in a dilemma. In 1956, he was as ambitious as Lin Zhen in his *A Young Man*, and insisted on exposing rather than acommodating. But after 1979, he tends to be more compromising with the existing social circumstances.

Of Wang Meng's post-1979 fiction, there are quite a number of stories generally regarded as "stream-of-consciousness" fiction such as "Bolshevik Salute,"[45] "The Eyes of Night,"[46] "The Butterfly,"[47] "Kite Streamers,"[48] "Voices of Spring"[49] and "Dreams of the Sea."[50] These stories are artistically superior to his early works, which are fairly conventional in technique. Using the technique of "stream-of-

consciousness," Wang Meng injects his characters with intense subjective feelings. "The Eyes of Night" and "Kite Streamers" exemplify this technique. In "The Eyes of Night," Wang Meng applies an intense visual sensitivity to the portrayal of a modern city at night with all its excitement and clamour. The protagonist of the story is an intellectual on leave, Chen Gao, who returns from the countryside and visits the city for the first time since leaving twenty years earlier. The glitter of the night city dazzles him. Spatially and psychologically, he feels lost when he stumbles into a group of newly-constructed rows of high-rise buildings to try to deliver a message entrusted to him by the leader of his work unit who needs some automobile parts. He does not meet the high-ranking cadre who can supply him the things that he wants. Instead, he runs into that cadre's son, whose arrogant attitude and decadent lifestyle disgusts him. By juxtaposing forceful images, the author enables us to join the protagonist in a mazy journey into the heart of city life.

> The boisterous cheers of the spectators and the football fans sitting before their TV sets mingled with the familiar voice of Zhang Zhi, the sports commentator. From other windows came the sounds of hammering, chopping, children yelling, or adults scolding.[51]

Through the use of audio-visual images, Wang Meng is able to transform an ordinary life experience into a nightmarish vision.

In "Kite Streamers," Wang Meng depicts a pair of young lovers, Susu and Jiayuan, who have nowhere to go for their rendezvous until at last they find a place in a newly-constructed empty high-rise building. This story is remarkable in its emotional tone. Although it unfolds mainly from the girl's point of view, it is narrated through an outside

voice which is closely related to the mental processes of the young lovers. The narrative voice is intensely reflected in the passage describing the two lovers' complaint:

> Look, look, and a whole night is used up. Our vast and boundless sky and land, our magnificent three-dimensional space—is there any corner for the young people to talk, embrace and kiss? We only need a very small place. And you—you have room for towering heroes and earth-shaking rebels, for vermin and villains that besmear heaven and earth, for so many battlefields. detonation fields, broad squares, meeting grounds, execution grounds . . . but you have no room for the passionate love between Susu and Jiayuan: one 160 centimeters tall and weighing 48 kilograms; the other barely 170 centimeters in height and weighing 54 kilograms.[52]

Evidently, the descriptions are exaggerated in order to invoke the reader's sympathy for the young lovers' desperate search.

Wang Meng's experimentation with "stream-of-consciousness" has not lost its grip on Chinese reality. It only serves to break away from its grip of political ideology. His use of florid language and jerky rhythm in his recent fiction reflects the rapid changes and complexity of life in post-Mao China. In his own words:

> When we write about psychology, feelings, and consciousness we have not forgotten that they are reflections of life; we have not forgotten their social significance. It is just that we hope to be able to write with "exceptional insight," and with more depth, more distinctive characteristics, more "flavor." For all these reasons, our "stream-of-consciousness" is not a stream-of-consciousness that urges people to escape reality by an inward flight; it is rather a healthy and substantial self-feeling that urges people to face both the objective and the subjective worlds, to love life and to love human heart.[53]

As shown in Wang Meng's early and recent works, no matter what technique he uses, the reflection of life is the main thread. On many

occasions, personal experience shines through his works.

After his re-emergence in 1979, Wang Meng has become more skillful in handling his techniques to portray the complexity of life and changes in society. His radical experimentation with literary techniques and craftsmanship poses a bold challenge to the conventional techniques of both Socialist Realism and critical realism that have been used in China for decades. In this respect, Wang Meng stands at the forefront in technical exploration among Chinese writers.

Wang Meng belongs to the first generation of Chinese youth after 1949. Devoted to revolution in his early youth, he believed that literature was inseparable from the revolution. Under this premise, Wang Meng began his literary career in the early 1950s, to use literature as a weapon to combat social evils. His works reflect his perception of life at different stages. His following words best summarize his life and works since the 1950s:

> In the fifties, I was relatively clear what to write about. I was a simpler person, and it seems to me that society was less complex too. If I try to formulate the essence of my writing in those years, I would say "revolution plus youth." I wrote about our passionate belief in our whole revolution. And of course, as an ardent young revolutionary, I exposed and attacked certain negative phenomena. . . . [Now,] life is more complex . . . and I am more complete too. In certain ways, however, there has not been any great change. My aesthetic ideal of "youth plus revolution," the high hopes which I have had of our people ever since childhood when I dedicated myself to the revolution, are still to be seen in my works today.[54]

Notes

1 "Zuzhibu laile ge nianqingren" (A Young Man Arrives at the Organization Department) (hereafter *A Young Man*) is the original title of the story, and it has been revived in some later anthologies, such as *Duanpian xiaoshuo xuan, 1956* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1957); *Duan pian xiaoshuo xuan, 1949-1979* (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue chubanshe, 1980); and also in Wang Meng's own anthology, *Dongyu* (Winter Rain) (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue chubanshe, 1980), 23-64. In "Afterword" in *Dongyu*, Wang Meng indicates that he has edited and made some changes in his old work(s), in order to restore it/them to its/their original version. It is highly probable that Wang refers to *A Young Man*, see *ibid.*, 321. Hereafter quotations from this story in the anthology *Dongyu* will be cited as *YM* in the text. It should be noted that with the revival of the original title of the story in some later editions, those changes that affect the personalities of the characters are also revived by the author, with the exception of some minor changes meant to improve the diction.

2 Wang Meng, "Zhuzhibu xinlai de qingnianren" (The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department), *RMWX*, 9 (Sept. 8, 1956), 29-43. Translated as "A New Young Man Arrives at the Organization Department, in *CB*, 459 (1957), 1-32 according to the changes noted in the article, "*Renmin Wenxue* bienjibu dui 'Zuzhibu xinlai de qingnianen' yuangao de xiugai qingkuang" (The Changes of "The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department" by the Editorial Board of *People's Literature*) in *RMRB* (May 9, 1957), 7. Hereafter page references from the translated text in *CB* will be indicated in square brackets in the text. My translations sometimes may be slightly different from this text.

3 By Nikolai Ostrovsky. *How the Steel Was Tempered* was divided into two parts. Both Parts One and Two were published in book form in 1932 and 1934 respectively. See S. Tregub, *The Heroic Life of Nikolai Ostrovsky*, tr. by Helen Altschuler (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n. d.), 47, 59.

4 "Bai mao nü" (The White-Haired Girl) (1944), co-authored by He Jingzhi (b. 1924) and Ding Yi (b. 1921).

5 "Li Youcai banhua" (The Clapper Songs of Li Youcai) (1944), by Zhao Shuli (1906-1970).

6 Ma Feng (b. 1922) and and Xi Rong (b. 1922), *Lüliang yingxiong zhuan*, 2 vols. (Beijing: Xinhua shudian, 1949).

7 The terms "poisonous weed" (a politically unacceptable work of art) and "fragrant flower" (an acceptable one) were introduced by Mao Zedong in 1957 in his "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People," *SW*, V:411.

8 Wang Meng "Wenxue yu wo" (Literature and I) in *Wang Meng Lun*, by Zeng Zhennan (Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1987), 390.

9 Sylvia Chan, "The Images of A 'Capitalist Roader'—Some Dissident Short Stories in the Hundred Flowers Period," *The Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 2 (1979), 87. See also Mao's speech in Chapter 4, pp. 78-79.

10 The Chinese like to use the word "capped" to refer to those who were given derogatory labels such as "rightist"; "uncapped" refers to those who have been rehabilitated.

11 Chen Yunhao and Hu Jing, "Chun hua qiu shi—ji zuojia Wang Meng" (Spring Flowers and Autumn Fruits—An Account of the Writer Wang Meng), *Wang Meng zhuan ji* (Guizhou: Guizhou Renmin chubanshi, 1984), 19.

12 Wang, "Literature and I," 390.

13 Chen Yunhao and Hu Jing, "Spring Flowers and Autumn Fruits," 21.

14 Historians such as Maurice Meisner regard the Cultural Revolution period as lasting from 1966 to 1969. The years from 1969 to 1976 are regarded as the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. See Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 330-369. The present leadership in Beijing, most of whom were among the political victims of the Cultural Revolution condemn the Cultural Revolution period as ten years of "catastrophe," which officially dated from May 1966 to October 1976. See *ibid.*, 309.

15 Wang Meng, "Guxiang xing—chongfang Bayandai" (A Journey to my Hometown—Bayandai Revisited), *RMRB* (Jan. 11, 1982), 7.

16 "May 7 Cadre School" took its name from the date and the program of instruction from the contents of a letter written by Mao Zedong to Lin Biao in 1966, in which he discussed the necessity for a diversification of talents among different sectors of people, such as armymen, workers, peasants, students and cadres. It was a diversification that Mao believed could only be carried out through practical experience. See "Letter to Camrade Lin Biao: Comment on the 'Report on Making a Greater Success of Farming by Armed Force Units' from the General Logistics Department of the Military Commission" (May 7, 1966), *CB*, 891 (1966), 56-57.

17 "Benteng zai Yili he shang" (Surging on the Yili River) (by Mahemuti. Maihemaiti) in *Wang Meng xiaoshuo baogao wenxue xuan* (Selection of Wang Meng's Fiction and Reportage) (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1981), 391-398.

18 Wang Meng, "A Journey to my Hometown;" 7.

19 Wang Meng, "A Journey to my Hometown," 7; Wang Meng, "Literature and I," 395; Ma Wenbin and Zhou Zhizhuo, "Zuojia Wang Meng Chongfan 'guxiang,'" (The Writer Wang Meng Returned to his "Hometown"), *Xinjiang Wenxue* (Xinjiang Literature), (Dec. 1981), 80.

20 Wang Meng, "Literature and I," 391.

21 Wang Meng, "Wo zai xunzhao shenmo?" (What Am I Searching For?), *WYB*, 10 (1980), 43. Translated by Rui An in *The Butterfly and Other Stories* (Beijing: Chinese Literature, 1983), 18.

22 "Gei pi cuo de zuopin he shou pohai de zuojia pingfan" (To Rehabilitate the Wrongly Accused Literary Works and the Persecuted Writers), *RMRB* (Dec. 23, 1978), 1.

23 Richard Kraus, "Culture," *China Briefing, 1987*, ed. John S. Major and Anthony J. Kane (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1987), 116.

24 Geremie Barme, "Artist on a Non-stop See-saw Ride," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (Oct. 5, 1989), 71.

25 Wang Meng, *Qingchun wansui* (Long Live Youth) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1979). This novel was made into a film in 1984.

26 Wang Meng "Long Live Youth," *WHB*, 11-12, 14-19, 21-26, 29-30 (Jan. 1957), 3; 4-9, 11-18 (Feb. 1957), 3.

27 Wang Meng, "Literature and I," 389.

[28] Wang Meng, "Xiao Dou'er" (Little Bean), *RMWX*, 11 (1955), 17-21.

[29] Wang Meng, "Chunjie" (Spring Festival), *WYXX*, 3 (1956), 36-38.

[30] For the controversy aroused by *A Young Man* see Chapter 4.

[31] Wang Meng, "Dongyu" (Winter Rain), *RMWX*, 1 (1957), 17-18.

[32] Wang Meng, "Yanjing" (The Eyes), *BJWY*, 10 (1962), 9-13.

[33] Wang Meng, "Yeyu" (Night Rain), *RMWX*, 12 (1962), 66-71.

[34] Wang Meng's use of the "stream-of-consciousness" technique should not be understood in the Western sense. Wang Meng does not deny that he has borrowed some Western techniques such as "stream-of-consciousness," but he does not confine himself to these techniques; he is also influenced by the Tang Dynasty poets Li Shangyin (813-858) and Li He (790-816). See Wang Meng, "Wo zai Xunzao shemo?" 43; *The Butterfly and Other Stories*, 21.

[35] Wang Meng, "Qianyan" (forword) to "Yili Fengqing" (Custom and Life in Yili), *Dongfang* (Orient), 2 (1981), 78.

[36] Wang Meng, "Zhibian fengjing" (The Scenery on this Side), *Xinjiang Wenyi* (Xinjiang Literature and Art), (July, 1978 [part 1 & 2]), 6-19; and (Aug., 1978 [part 3, 4 & 5]), 47-64.

[37] Wang Meng, "Custom and Life in Yili" *Dongfang*, 2 (1981), 80-102.

[38] Wang Meng, "Maimaiti Chuzhang yishi: Wewuer ren de 'heise youmo,'" (The Anecdotes of Section Chief Maimaiti: "Black Humor" of the Uigurs), *Xinjiang Wenyi* (Xinjiang Literature and Art) (Mar. 1980), 3-28.

[39] Wang Meng, "Geshen" (The Goddess of Song), *RMWX*, 8 (1979), 38-49.

[40] Wang Meng, "Duizhang, shuji, yemao he banjie kuaizi de gushi" (The Story of a Brigade, a Secretary, a Wild Cat and one Half of a Chopstick), *RMWX*, 5 (1978), 39-52.

41 "Wound" literature derives its name from Lu Xinhua's story "Wound." See Lu Xinhua, "Shanghen," *WHB* (Aug. 11, 1978) (also included in several anthologies). "Wound" literature "takes the perspective of the post-Gang of Four period to describe events that took place during the Cultural Revolution [principally the exercise of tyranny and resistance to it], and the chaos that ensued." See Richard King, "'Wounds' and 'Exposure': Chinese Literature after the Gang of Four," *Pacific Affairs*, 54:1 (1981), 85.

42 Wang Meng, "Wo zai xunzhao shenmo?" 43; *The Butterfly and Other Stories*, 20.

43 Wang Meng "Youyou cun cao xin" (A Fervent Wish), *SHWX*, (Sept. 1979), 4-16; *Xiaoshuo yuebao* (Fiction Monthly), 3 (1980), 37-44. Translated by Betty Ting in *Prize-winning Stories from China, 1978-1979* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1981), 412-440.

44 Wang Meng, "Wo zai xunzhao shenmo?" 43; *The Butterfly and Other Stories*, 19-20.

45 Wang Meng, "Buli" (Bolshevik Salute) *Dangdai* (Contemporary) 3 (1979), 4-39.

46 Wang Meng, "Ye de yan" (The Eyes of Night) first appeared in *GMRB*, (Oct. 21, 1979); Wang Meng et al, *Ye de yan ji qita* (The Eyes of Night and Others) (Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 1981), 101-114. Translated by Wang Mingjie in *The Butterfly and Other Stories*, 103-112.

47 Wang Meng, "Hudie" (The Butterfly), *Shiyue*, 4 (1980), 4-37. Translated by Gladys Yang in *The Butterfly and Other Stories*, 35-101.

48 Wang Meng, "Fengzheng piaodai" (Kite Streamers), *BJWY*, 5 (1980), 6-13. Translated by Lü Binghong in *The Butterfly and Other Stories*, 155-185.

49 Wang Meng, "Chun zhi sheng" (Voices of Spring) *RMWX*, 5 (1980), 10-16. Translated by Bonnie S. McDougall in *The Butterfly and Other Stories*, 138-154.

50 Wang Meng, "Hai de meng" (Dreams of the Sea), *SHWX*, (June 1980), 4-10.

51 Wang Meng, *Ye de ji qita*, 105; *The Butterfly and Other Stories*, 105.

[52] Wang Meng, "Kite Streamers," *BJWY*, 5 (1980), 6-15. Translated by Leo Ou-fan Lee, see "The Politics of Technique: Perspective of Literary Dissidence in Contemporary Chinese Fiction" in Jeffrey C. Kinkley ed., *After Mao: Chinese Literature and society, 1978-1981* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 167.

[53] Wang Meng, "An Open Letter on 'Stream-of-consciousness,'" tr. Michael S. Duke, *Modern Chinese Literature*, 1:1 (Sept. 1984), 28.

[54] Wang Meng, "My Exploration," *Chinese Literature* (Jan. 1981), 57.

CHAPTER 3

Anti-Bureaucratism and Character Development in "A Young Man"

In April 1956, Mao Zedong launched the slogan "let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend" (*baihua qifang, baijia zhengming*), which was supposed to be the principal spirit of a new literary policy for Chinese intellectuals.[1] Under this policy, writers were encouraged to write on various new subjects and use various new ways of literary expression. Writers might now depict reality as it is, or according to their perception of life,[2] rather than using the orthodox method of Socialist Realism, which demands that writers depict reality in its revolutionary development, or, in the Party's view, what it ought to be.[3]

Obviously, Wang Meng's "A Young Man Arrives at the Organization Department"[4] was written when this new literary policy was being propounded and discussed, and it was published in *People's Literature* in September 1956.[5] Thus, the appearance of the story may be regarded as a response to this policy.[6] In fact, a number of works in this vein had been published before and after Wang's *A Young Man*, such as Liu Binyan's "At the Construction Site of the Bridge" (April 1956)[7] and "The Inside News of the Newspaper" (June & October 1956)[8] and Li Qing's "The Degeneration of Ma Duan" (February 1957).[9] In his 1979 article, "On 'Writing the Dark Sides' and 'Intervening in Life,'" Liu Binyan clearly indicated that it was because of the relaxation of the literary policy at that time (1956) that his above two works and Wang Meng's *A Young Man* were released.[10]

Apparently, *A Young Man* was influenced by the Soviet novel, *The Newcomer: The Manager of an MTS and the Chief Agronomist* (1954), by Galina Nikolayeva.[11] Both *A Young Man* and *The Newcomer* express the theme of anti-bureaucratism. According to Wang Meng, he had two objectives when he wrote the story: one was "to portray some characters with flaws in order to reveal the negative aspects in work and life"; the other was "to raise a question whether a young man like Lin Zhen who is so enthusiastic in opposing bureaucratism but often confronts considerable difficulties in his 'struggle,' has anywhere to turn to?"[12] Also, in a letter, Wang Meng emphasized his conviction that a literary work could reflect the "contradictions among the ranks of the people" and that his *A Young Man* was an attempt to present these contradictions.[13] In other words, he intended to present the contradictions between the idealists who uphold their idealism and the degenerated bureaucrats who practise bureaucratism.

It is noteworthy that works critical of reality written around the Hundred Flowers Period by Wang Meng, Liu Binyan, and Li Qing shared the same characteristics: while acknowledging the accomplishments of the new society, their stories also criticized the darker side of that society, particularly bureaucratism. *A Young Man* especially has, to a great extent, fulfilled the author's intention of exposing the "contradictions among the people." More significant is the magnitude to which the story allows the reader to probe into the core of the problem: the root of bureaucratism, which was and still is the main concern of Chinese society. Viewed from today's perspective, the large-scale adoptation of the Soviet model of development in the 1950s

was, for the most part, responsible for the emergence of many problems of bureraucratism.

The Idealists and the Bureaucrats

In Wang Meng's *A Young Man*, Lin Zhen (Earthquake Lin or Quaker Lin, a literal translation of Lin Zhen's name, which signifies his "naive enthusiasm ascribed to youths")[14] and Zhao Huiwen, may be considered as "positive" figures. They are idealistic and enthusiastic when they newly arrive at the District Organization Department.[15] Lin Zhen has been a teacher in the district central primary school after graduating from a teachers college in 1953. Like the author, he is twenty-two[16] and a Party member. Lin Zhen, who has read Galina Nikolayena's *The Newcomer* is influenced by the character of Nastya, the heroine in Nikolayeva's novel. Nastya is a fresh graduate from the agricultural college who takes up her duties as chief agronomist at the tractor station. Although inexperienced, she is enthusiastic and capable. She is not only resolved to fight for a better life for people and to accomplish success in her work, but also tries to be honest in her every undertaking. After she arrives at the tractor station, she discovers severe bureaucratic abuses. With the knowledge she has learned from books, she "unites with the masses" to combat the inertia and slackness in the tractor station. Consequently, because of her passionate desire and persistent effort, she is able to rectify the bureaucratic practices in the tractor station. Through her introduction of scientific farming and her ability to secure the

co-operation of the rural activists and the mechanics in the station, there is an enormous increase in the production in the most backward "kolkhoz."

Lin Zhen, an idealistic, disciplined, principled and diligent youth with high ambition, has begun to challenge life. He admires Nastya, and aims to emulate her uncompromising fighting spirit.[17] It should be noted that Nikolayeva's novel was welcomed by readers both in the Soviet Union and China. In the Soviet Union, it was noted that even the minister of agriculture carried the book with him to a conference as reference materials, and at the same time recommended it to the audience. In China, it was recommended to Youth League members. As an enthusiastic youth, Lin Zhen is very much inspired by that novel. Like Nastya, who "had an unshakable faith in the printed word,"[18] Lin Zhen embarks upon his new work with high expectations, and "full of sacred visions of the life of a Party worker (based on the images of the omnipotent Party secretaries in the movies)" (*YM*, 29, [6]). When he arrives at the Organization Department of the District Party Committee, he carries with him the novel as his reference and guide for his new job. Perhaps Lin Zhen is a typical product of the educational system at that time, when students learned by rote.[19] He is one of the twenty-four cadres in the Organization Department.[20] Upon his arrival, Lin is told by Liu Shiwu (Rudolf Wagner literalizes Liu's name to "Liu The-World-Is-Me,"[21] which seems to imply that he is a man of worldly experience) the deputy director of the Organization Department, that "Organizational work is the housekeeping of the Party. If the house is not well cared after, the Party will have no strength" (*YM*, 25, [2]).

These remarks to a certain extent indicate the duty and responsibility of the Organization Department.[22]

Lin Zhen's first assignment is to deal with the investigation of recruitment work in a gunny sack factory. Instead of producing any fruitful result at the outset, Lin Zhen is surprised to discover that the factory Manager and Party secretary, Wang Qingquan, is a degenerate person who neglects his duty by indulging himself in playing chess all day long, and is only capable of giving instructions and accusing the workers of not doing their work well. A fellow cadre in the factory, Wei Heming, complains of Wang's misconduct to Lin. Without a second thought, the idealistic Lin suggests that he report to the higher-ups, saying that: "The higher levels can't possibly allow this sort of factory manager" (*YM*, 32, [7]). Wei cynically replies: "Old Lin, you're new, aren't you?" Wei goes on to explain his repeated failure in attempting to report Wang's misbehavior to the authorities concerned. In spite of this, Lin Zhen insists on bringing this case to his immediate superior, Han Changxin, a chief of the Factory Party Organization Development Section. Contrary to Lin's expectation, Han, who already knows all about Wang, makes a remark similar to Wei's, stressing that "This is the first time you've gone to a factory and you don't understand the entire situation. Your job isn't to solve the problems of Wang Qingquan and moreover, to speak frankly, a more experienced cadre is needed to solve this problem. . . . If you go jumping into this business you won't get out for three months" (*YM* 34, [9]). Wei and Han's pointed remarks signify their cynicism at Lin's naivete and inexperience. However, Lin Zhen decides to approach the

higher-up, the deputy director of the Organization Department, Liu Shiwu, an intelligent, experienced and polished administrator (the Directer of the Organization Department, Li Zongqin, seldom directly involves himself with departmental affairs; instead, he entrusts the actual work to Lin Shiwu). Although Liu is also well informed of Wang's slackness, he masterfully puts it that Wang "doesn't work hard but it hasn't developed to the negative point of slow-down; his work style is somewhat crude but no violation of law or discipline is involved . . . Looked at from every angle, the time is not yet ripe to solve this problem" (*YM*, 41, [14]). Confronted with this situation, Lin is frustrated, confused, and unable to decide whether Nastya's principle of "absolute intolerence of evil" or Liu Shiwu's "theory of ripe conditions" is correct (*YM*, 41, [14]). Liu Shiwu even criticizes Lin's copying of "Nastya-type of hero": "a young man easily idealizes life, he believes life should be a certain way and then demands that it should be that way. . . . This is a valuable and lovable idea but it is also a kind of vanity" (*YM*, 44, [16]). On hearing this "advice" and "analysis" from his superiors, Lin Zhen is upset, anguished, and unable to untangle his thoughts. This episode demonstrates the lesson given to a naive and idealistic youth; it also reveals his first failure in confronting bureaucratism, and it foreshadows his later frustrations.

Zhao Huiwen, the Department Organization's secretary, is the only person that can share Lin Zhen's feelings and sympathize with him. She is twenty-three and shares a similar temperament with Lin Zhen. Zhao also encountered difficulties similar to Lin's when she first arrived at the Department. She too, gave many suggestions to her superiors and

even quarrelled with Han Changxin; however, she was regarded as childish. Gradually, she gave up any hope of fighting against the shortcomings of the District Party Committee (*YM*, 47, [18]). Now, after having experienced much setback and frustration, she feels tired and disappointed and has lost much of her enthusiasm. She gives a telling account to Lin Zhen about the situation in the department, especially Han Changxin and Liu Shiwu's work style, yet she is too skeptical about her own ability to offer any solution. Her present situation can be seen as a foreshadowing of Lin Zhen's forthcoming failures. Lin has no better solution regarding this matter; nonetheless he is much more optimistic, and exemplifies his Marxist viewpoint saying that: "I think a person can correct himself in the course of fighting and can't wait until he is first correct before entering into a fight"[23] (*YM*, 50, [21]). And he has been able to put his words into action by urging Wei Heming to send the opinions he had gathered at the meeting to the Party newspaper. Encouraged by Lin, Wei and several workers send a letter to the *Beijing Daily*. At last, Wang Qingquan is dismissed from his post and from the Party. Lin Zhen is not satisfied at just having Wang Qingquan punished. At a meeting of the district committee's standing committee to discuss Wang's case, Lin courageously takes this opportunity to denounce Han Changxin and Liu Shiwu for having permitted this problem to exist for five years, and insists that both Lin and Han should be considered responsible for it. Wang Qingquan's case reaches the point where it has to a certain degree exposed the bureaucratism of some of the Party members in the Organization Department, but there is no tidy or effective solution.

The bureaucrats, Wang Qingquan, Liu Shiwu, and Han Changxin, despite their shortcomings, are intelligent and capable, and some of them were once good Party members. But they are now demoralized or degenerated. To the idealists like Lin Zhen, the bureaucrats are obstacles to the progress of the society in general and the Organization Department in particular. Han Changxin is a brilliant, accomplished and efficient, yet slick, pompous and cynical person. Perhaps Han's name, as Rudolf Wagner literalizes it, "Han-Always-With-The-Latest-Wind," implies his attitude, a person who does not dutifully discharge his responsibility, but instead, assumes "a bureaucratic manner without in any way sharing the worker's and basic level cadres' urge," and whose only interest is to go along with the wind.[24] He has no ideals, principles, or sense of responsibility, but he is skillful at convincing his superiors that he has done things well. In other words, he is a Party member without any conviction. Perhaps his motive for joining the Communist Party is merely a convenience in life — a key to social mobility. It should be noted that since Han Changxin is twenty-seven, he probably joined the Communist Party about the time of Liberation in 1949, when the recruitment policy was readjusted to recruit new members who were mainly the "technical and intellectual youth, particularly young workers."[25]

Liu Shiwu may be seen as a rascal, intolerable to Lin Zhen, but he appears as a lovable and admirable cadre to many. In his youthful days, he was as idealistic and imaginative as Lin Zhen. He was also a devoted student leader in Beijing University, and was badly wounded in

a demonstration parade nine years previously. The arc-shaped scar in his left leg acts as a glorious reminder of his revolutionary past. Like Lin Zhen, he is also fond of novels, of which he has read many, including Nikolayena's book which he has borrowed from Lin Zhen. A good novel makes him dream of "a pure, beautiful, transparent life" (YM, 52, [23]). This shows another aspect of his life, a life which he regards as devoid of reality. But with his worldly experience, he warns that as a Party worker one shouldn't read novels, because life in reality is not as beautiful as it is in novels. This is a sign of his loss of idealism. It implies that as long as the existing social order remains intact, even idealists can turn into degenerate bureaucrats.

Wang Qingquan, the main target of criticism, is a villain to Lin Zhen and those from below, but he is not totally a scoundrel in the eyes of bureaucrats like Liu Shiwu and Han Changxin. According to Liu Shiwu, Wang had been an intelligent and capable officier. He was sent to penetrate the Nationalist army, and is one of the Communist Party's best intelligence agents. But in the process of undermining the "enemy," he picked up some bad habits from the "enemy," which he fails to shake off. After all, he is still "a brave old comrade" (YM, 41, [14]). However, in the eyes of his subordinates, Wang's laziness and rudeness, as well as his despotic and irresponsible attitude, disqualify him to be a real leader — he is only a leader who is good at finding fault with others and never his own. This attitude is manifested especially at the monthly meetings of the Union, the Party Branch, and the Youth League, where Wang "would make a speech criticizing the workers for not carrying out mass competition well, for

their indifference to quality, for their economistic ideology." (*YM*, 32, [7]). Wang is a typical Party member who before 1949 "was the exemplary soldier whose courage and military skill were priority assets in the struggle with the Kuomintang [Nationalists],"[26] but he is now a poor administrator, one of the many army cadres who turned into administrators after 1949.

Some of the other bureaucrats are also portrayed in a relatively negative light. Li Zhongqin, the head of the Organization Department, is said to be in bad health, and rarely concerns himself with the Department's affairs. He prefers to do theoretical work rather than the District Party Committee work, for he regards the latter as being too practical. Obviously, he belongs to the category which Zhao Huiwen classifies this way:

> [T]here is a group of old Party members whose health is bad, or whose cultural level is low, or who, because they are some big wheel's spouse, hold the titular rank of factory manager, school principal, or secretary but whose assistant factory manager, executive officer, secretary, or some other capable person does the actual work (*YM*, 49, [20]).

Furthermore, there are also committee members who ask for leave whenever there is a call for the approval of new Party members at the meeting of the standing committee. And at such meetings too, the Public Security chief often falls asleep.

The contradictions between the idealists and the bureaucrats can be seen as what Mao said were the contradictions "between the leadership and the led, and the contradictions arising from the bureaucratic style of work of some of the state personnel in their relations with the masses."[27] These types of contradictions were

classified as contradictions among the people. It seems that the idealists have embraced the same social values as Mao, who differentiates styles of work which command public support from those which create public contempt:

> selfishness, slacking, corruption, seeking the limelight, and so on, are most contemptible; while selflessness, working with all one's energy, whole-hearted devotion to public duty, and quiet hard work will command respect.[28]

Envisioned with these concepts, the idealists attack things that are negative, and anxiously expect matters to turn for the better if not the best. The bureaucrats, on the other hand, are to varying degrees afflicted with bureaucratism, slackness and procrastination. As John Wilson Lewis notes, bureaucratism "is the mistaken style of office-minded cadres who act officiously without informing themselves adequately about the concrete situations with which they deal and who think that sorting papers from 'in' to 'out' baskets is equivalent to the discharge of leadership responsibility."[29] As has been noted, the bureaucrats in the story not only assume bureaucratic airs, but are also neglectful in discharging their duties.

The Degenerate Bureaucrats: Products of the Soviet-tyle System

The failings of the bureaucrats can be attributed not only to their personal attitude, but more importantly to the organizational system, a Soviet-type managerial system based on "the orthodox Marxist assumption that socialism presupposed a high level of industrial development and with the orthodox Marxist-Leninist view that

industrialization [and thus the necessary material foundations for a socialist society] could best and most rapidly be accomplished in an economically backward land under the centralized direction of a strong socialist state power."[30] The importation of the Soviet model of development after 1949 had helped to build a state structure which by the mid-1950s became increasingly similar to the highly centralized Soviet bureaucractic system of state control, especially its centralized economic planning which had necessitated "the rapid bureaucratization and routinization of state and society."[31] Especially in industrial management, Michel Chossudovsky views the system as essentially "the old social and managerial hierarchy inherited from bureaucratic capitalism and transposed [in 1949] in the form of the Soviet model of industrial management." Not without coincidence, the adoptation of this model "gave legitimacy to the old Confucian social order" which was "based on a strict code of discipline and authority."[32]

This system greatly contrasts with the ideal Yan'an model of administration which was developed during the Yan'an era (late 1930s to early 1940s). Especially in the political arena, the Yan'an model of administration was based upon the principles of

> the mass line [which means taking the ideas from the masses and concentrating them, and then going to the masses]; campaigns for "simple administration"; the insistence on decentralized political structures that were responsive to local needs and conditions . . . and various *xiafang* ("sending down") and *xiaxiang* ("to the village") campaigns which demanded that party cadres, government officials, and intellectuals periodically participate in productive labor together with the masses.[33]

These measures were intended to reduce the gaps between the leaders and

the led. However, instead of narrowing this gap, the Soviet model of administration tended to widen it. In essence, the Soviet development strategy called for the redefinition of the role played by the Party organization at the grass-root level as well as those workers who laboured on the factory floor. Franz Schurmann notes,

> In the early 1950s the Chinese, emulating the Soviet experiences, sought to place great power in the hands of the managers. The Party's role was to be limited to that of moral leadership. The commands that counted came from higher echelons in the administrative system. Management commanded and the worker had to obey. . . . The factory, under one-man management, was conceived of as a coldly rational arrangement of individual workers commanded by an authoritarian manager.[34]

This notion of a "one-man management" helps set the stage to consolidate an administrative hierarchy which is strictly vertical in structure and highly authoritarian in nature. It is a system where future careers of factory managers depend on how responsive they are to the demands of their superiors rather than how well they meet the needs of, and how immediately they respond to, the criticism from those they control at the factory floors. Even the local Party members have no means to question the authority of these managers as they are both answerable to the same command of the higher level of the one and the same, the Party and the state organ, and eventually those leaders at the highest level who make economic policies. All these are the characteristics of the Soviet model of industrialization. And Meisner observes the social and political consequences:

> Centralized economic planning demanded the rapid bureaucratization and routinization of state and society. And that the Maoist preference for administrative simplicity gave way to complex and increasingly specialized structures; the cadres of a revolutionary

> party were transformed into administrators and bureaucratic functionaries; workers in factories were subjected to increasing control by factory managers."[35]

Also, the order of the day was to establish the economic foundations of the country in general, and to fulfill the First Five Year Plan (1953-1957) in particular. And this of course, was at the expense of other social values:

> the revolutionary faith in the initiative and spontaneity of the masses and mass movements faded as industrialization demanded authoritarian discipline, social stability, and economic rationality; socialist goals were postponed and partly ritualized in favor of the immediate and all-embracing goal of economic development.[36]

This Soviet model of management and administration can be seen from the Organization Department and gunny-sack factory in the story, first of all from Wang Qingquan's remarks: "I'm responsible to the higher levels. No matter how they deal with me, I've got to take it. Since you [Wei Heming] are the production chief, you'll have to be responsible to me" (*YM*, 31, [7]). Since Wei is Wang's subordinate, he has to be responsible to Wang. As there is no incentive provided by the system to respond to criticism from the lower level, when Wei reports Wang's misconduct to the Ministry of Textile Industry and the District Party Headquarters, the conclusion on Wang's case is that his achievement is more important than his bureaucratic attitude and erroneous style of work:

> Bureaucratism is comparatively serious, but most important is the manner of carrying out work; the tasks have been basically completed, it's only a question of shortcomings in the manner of completing them (*YM*, 32, [8]).

Reportedly, Wang's slackness and irresponsible attitude had been criticized, and he had made some improvements for about a month, but since then, he has come back to his old ways. However, Han Changxin, one of the cadres responsible for the investigation, tries to defend Wang against Wei's further criticisms by lecturing Wei "on respect for leadership and strengthening unity" (*YM*, 33, [8]). This is a sign of the emergence of a new social class: the bureaucrats, who try to defend the common interest of their fellow members. And this is precisely what Han has tried to do, to protect Wang in the name of general unity. And it is also for this reason that when Lin Zhen suggests that Wei criticize Wang or report him to the higher-ups, the latter exclaims: "Criticism doesn't work" (*YM*, 32, [8]). Even when Wang's case is exposed, Han condemns Lin Zhen for agreeing with Wei Heming to raliy a discussion meeting to expose Wang, and charges that Lin's action is "a kind of unorganized, undisciplined behavior" (*YM* 43, [15]).

When Lin Zhen complains to Liu Shiwu about Wang's case and Han's irresponsible attitude toward his work, Liu responds in a strikingly similar manner: he tries to protect Wang by delaying the handling of Wang's case with the excuse that "there are so many problems in lower level cells, how can you expect to solve them one by one by using handicraft methods? . . . Moreover, the upper echelons are always breathing down your neck with more assignments" (*YM*, 41, [14]). Liu also places great emphasis on the accomplishments of those responsible cadres and the Department rather than the defects in the Department or those misbehaved cadres:

> Regarding the work in the District Party Committee, including that of the Organization Department, what is

> basic, our accomplishments or our shortcomings? Obviously the accomplishments are basic, the shortcomings are shortcomings in the course of progress. Our great work is completed by just those imperfect organizations and Party members" (*YM*, 42, [15]).

The stress on achievements at the expense of defects in the organizations or the personnel concerned lies in the system itself, a system which makes economic fulfillment the top priority, and demands responsiblity to one's superiors, rather than to his subordinates or criticisms from below. Meisner observes that

> Although it constantly was repeated that managers were to be under "the ideological leadership of the Party," the significance of this injunction was problematic; it was the Party, after all, which had given the managers their authority in the first place and the operational ideology of the Party at the time was centered on fulfilling the economic targets of the Five Year Plan.[37]

That is why Han Changxin and Liu Shiwu show no concern with Wang's problems; instead, they are more preoccupied with the assignments which are pressed by the higher levels.

Since the demand for responsibility is primarily centred at the higher levels, a responsible cadre tends to procrastinate about the work which is absolutely within his duty. He is not necessarily responsible to the lower levels, but he must "meet" the demands of his superiors; thus, other matters seem to him relatively unimportant. Or in other words, the less he is involved, the less he encounters "troubles." Hence, in order to avoid troubles, the attitude of procrastination occurs. This attitude is manifested several times in the story; for instance, when Lin Zhen reports to Han Changxin about Wang's case, he coolly replies: "the problem of Wang Ch'ing-ch'uan [Qingquan] ought to be solved and can be solved . . . only, you

shouldn't go diving into this matter just like 'that'" (YM, 34, [9]). As for Liu Shiwu, he prefers to wait for "ripe conditions" before he takes any action to deal with this matter. Thus, when Wang's case is exposed and intervened in by his superiors, he makes a quick decision and handles it with great efficiency:

> He went into the workshop and thoroughly investigated everything about Wang Ch'ing-ch'uan [Qingquan] and sought the opinions of the workers. He consulted all departments concerned in the case, and in a little over a week's time, the whole case of Wang Ch'ing-ch'uan [Qingquan] had been cleared up — he was dismissed from his administrative position and from the Party (YM, 54-55, [25]).

The Soviet model of centralization of organizational structures is complex and specialized and it is always accompanied by routinization, "commandism,"[38] and bureaucratization in the working process. These phenomena can be seen in the Organization Department in the story. Liu Shiwu, the key figure in the Organization Department, is said to have been occupied with many routine works, such as writing work reports, assessing Party membership applications, and the handling of misbehaved Party members. The work load is so heavy that he has to give excuses, and not without self-pity: "I'm terribly busy! So busy that everything has become common, wearisome. Since Liberation I haven't slept for eight full hours on a single night. I have to deal with this man and that man, but I have no time to deal with myself" (YM, 56, [26]). Since he is so busy, when he reads documents, he only skims the title and the conclusion, signs his name and sends them off. On some occasions, he listens to Hang Changxin's report while reading other documents. He does not bother to respond even if he notices that there

are problems in Han's report (*YM*, 38, [12]). His work and its routine nature afflicts him with "an occupational disease" — a metaphorical expression he has coined. Because of this, everything to him seems unimportant and commonplace, or in Zhao Huiwen's words: "he knows everything, has seen everything . . . and so he can no longer be bothered: he no longer loves and also no longer hates." And his philosophy is: "everything is just that way [*yiqie jiu namo hui shi*]" (*YM*, 49, [20]). Liu is fully aware of his slackness and his growing apathy, but he tries to justify and disguise himself with Marxist-Leninist sophistry: "We Party workers have created a new life, but this new life is incapable of arousing us" (*YM*, 56 [26]). This is his honest confession and introspection.

Again, the excessive centralization of the organization usually gives rise to the attitude of commandism or arbitrary action. This type of leadership in the organization is characterized by its downward flow of information which is monopolized by orders or sometimes even applies coercion to insure submission. These phenomena can be seen from Wang Qingquan's attitude when he issues orders:

> "Inform all responsible persons in the Party, League, Union, and administrative departments that there will be a meeting at 12:10 in the Factory Manager's office." Then, slamming the door, he left (*YM*, 32, [7]).

There is also a natural tendency in this type of organization to employ commandism from above to increase production. This practice is also manifested in Wang Qingquan's commanding tone: "You've got to think of a way out! The question of quality was raised last year, how is it you have to wait until the contractor writes a letter to the Ministry of

Textiles? It's shameful if in the high tide of socialism our production can't gradually be raised" (YM, 31, [7]). Wang's aggressive attitude and behavior not only does not gain respect, but also provokes a strong aversion from his subordinates, especiallly Wei Heming.

Another social ill that arises from bureaucratization in an organization is the attitudes adopted by bureaucrats. For instance, Han Changxin knows that Wang Qingquan is neglecting his duty by indulging himself in playing chess, but he does not take any immediate action; instead he puts on airs toward his subordinates. Indeed, Zhao Huiwen's observation best describes Han's personality: "He's more like a leading cadre than the leading cadres" (YM, 27, [4]). And "he acts as a leader, gives instructions in a loud, clear voice; in reports he knows how to dredge up vivid examples; in analysing problems he knows how to string together generalizations; and so he seems a vigorous and capable cadre and floats complacently along on top of the world" (YM, 48, [19]). Hence, when he investigates the gunny sack factory, he simply asks some stereotyped questions, and then fabricates a facile and slick report which is full of statistics and the current political jargon. The untruthful report and the obfuscating language certainly prevent the free flow of communication in the hierarchy. Han's working attitude may be explained in terms of his irresponsibility, and/or his ulterior motive to satisfy his superiors in the hierarchy without giving any responsibility to his subordinates. Although there is no sign in the story that Han's work style is due to pressure from his superiors, it is highly possible that this could be the case within this type of organizational system. It should be noted that making

false reports was common. One of the reasons put forward by Mao was that: "many lies are told due to the pressures of a higher level. When the higher level resorts to trumpet blowing, applying pressure and making promises, it makes things difficult for the lower level."[39]

Liu Shiwu's bureaucratic attitude is not as obvious as that of Han Changxin and Wang Qingquan, perhaps because of the guise of his "art of leadership" (*YM*, 41, [14]). Wang Meng had argued that certain aspects of Liu Shiwu's character cannot be simply viewed as "bureaucratic" and that what he wanted to emphasize was Liu's attitude of taking everything for granted rather than his bureaucratic attitude toward his work.[40] Whether Liu's attitude is "bureaucratic" or not is immaterial; rather, it is his indifferent attitude that calls for great attention. Liu is eloquent in giving instructions, and well versed in the rules and regulations of the Party as well as in the function of the Oraganization Department and the responsibility of a Party worker. However, he not only neglects his duty but also merely uses those rules and regulations to instruct others. Ironically, the moral education, "criticism and self criticism, and close ties with the masses" (*YM*, 25, [3]) with which he is so instrumental in indoctrinating his subordinates, is only meant "to cure the diseases of others" (*YM*, 55, [25]) and not his own bureaucratic lethargy. Furthermore, he allows the "occupational disease" to "corrode" him, without taking any initiative to break through it or get rid of it. Perhaps one of the causes of his apathy is what Wang Mang had observed: he alienates himself from the masses and the reality of life. Before he has established close ties with the masses and become an exemplary member,

he rises above them.[41]

However, this type of attitude is closely related to the system itself, which is responsible for producing the "Liu Shiwu-type of apathy." For as a cadre and a Party member, Liu is answerable to the higher, rather than the lower. As long as his superiors feel that his work style does not hamper his work, or he himself thinks that he does not commit any "mistake" or "serious mistake," he can always ignore criticism from below, and go on his own way. However, the critic Zeng Zhennan holds that "Liu Shiwu-type of apathy" was due to the growing "leftist tendency" in the political arena in China at that time. Hence, one's feeling of impulse in life, pure enthusiasm and romantic fantasy, the so-called "deeply ingrained bourgeois character," had to be suppressed. He adds that this kind of "apathy" is basically the remnant of old China.[42] Zeng's view seems difficult to establish. It should be noted that it is a current and also official tendency to attribute all the evils that have happened in China to the past or feudal tradition.[43] But as Maurice Meisner notes, to attribute the weaknesses of the Chinese present to the influence of the past, as the May Fourth (1919) intellectuals did seventy years ago, is "to deny that the problems that have afflicted and continued to afflict the People's Republic may be the contradictions inherent in the society produced by the Revolution itself rather than remnants inherited from the imperial past."[44] It is precisely the system which was created by the "Revolution" that generates "Liu Shiwu-type of apathy." To ignore this by simply echoing the current attribution of every social ill to the past, such as Zeng does, is perhaps more out of political necessity

than political reality. Evidently, in the story, most of the bureaucrats were once revolutionaries, but their revolutionary zeal has faded in proportion to the passage of time, and they have gradually become conservatives and indulge in bureaucratism, a situation which has very much disappointed the young idealists.

These phenomena are not found in Wang Meng's story alone; Liu Binyan's *Bridge* and *News*, and Li Qing's *Ma Duan*, also convey a similar message. In both of Liu's works, young people are idealistic, enthusiastic, and courageous as contrasted with the complacent, self-interested, conservative and apathetic bureaucrats. Again, the conflict between the young people and the bureaucracy-ridden leaders in both of Liu's works stems from the Soviet bureaucratic system. In *Bridge*, the young engineer, Zeng Gang, is enthusiastic and efficient as compared with the conservative and bureaucratic leaders such as Luo Lizheng and Zhou Weiben. Luo, the chief of the construction crew and a veteran Party member, becomes an expert in bridge construction. He is proud of being the first to build a steel-arched bridge in China, which is also a realization of his youthful dream before 1949. Adding to his complacency is the completion of more than thirty bridges under his leadership. With this accomplishment, he is now no more concerned whether the work schedules have been met or the cost of building has exceeded the budget. For him, "no matter how many defects there may be accomplishment is still the main thing" (*Bridge*, 213). For example, as long as the construction of a bridge is completed, everything else is secondary. In order to avoid troubles, he always depends on "the correct leadership of the Party" (*Bridge*, 221). And

his philosophy is: "Don't make mistakes! If you avoid making mistakes, you have won a victory" (*Bridge*, 221). Thus, Luo "recognized only the decisions, instructions, regulations, and rules which came from the Bureau; as for all the ideas, suggestions, or procedures coming from the masses, he ignored them . . . [and] the most important thing [was] grasping the intentions of the leaders" (*Bridge*, 216). In other words, he executes every directive from his immediate superiors even if it does not accord with the general policy of the Party and even if it impedes the work's progress. Luo's conservatism is in contrast with Zeng Gang's initiative and responsive attitude toward the innovative suggestions of the workers. And because of their different approaches towards their work, they produce different results. For instance, both Luo and Zeng are constructing a bridge on the Yellow River, and at one time face the dangers of spring floods. At this critical juncture, Luo, as usual, continues to wait for instruction from his superiors before acting, and the result is that his bridge piers collapse and the machinery is carried away by the flood. Zeng, on the other hand, makes a quick decision, mobilizes the workers and takes the neccesary precautions to just in time raise the piers of his bridge above the rising water so that work can be carried on above the water level. However, Luo is uncomfortable with the very existence of Zeng, whose success is a threat to him, and it is little wonder why a month later Zeng is transferred to a factory. Zeng's dismissal exemplifies the fate of idealists in the bureaucratic system.

Luo is quick to bend with the wind. When Mao's report *On the Question of Agricultural Cooperation* was published, the whole nation

was inspired and plunged into a high tide of labor enthusiasm, which was to be followed by a wave of rectifying conservatism in all sectors of economic construction. The type of bureaucratic conservativism exemplified by Luo Lizheng was exposed. When this happens in the story, Luo is placed on the defensive and then organizes a campaign to criticize conservatism by giving many examples to prove how conservative "we" are. By using "we," he implies that he is just one of the many conservatives, thereby reducing his "error." He further excuses himself by saying that there was no directive from the Central Committee of the Party at that time. Luo's conservatism is shared by another engineer, Zhou Weiben, who is characterized in the following way by a worker: "When a screw is needed to be transported from the south to the north bank, he has to seek instructions from his higher-ups."[45]

Descriptions of similar bureaucratic and conservative behaviour among the bureaucrats can be found in *News*, where such behavior is challenged by an earnest and idealistic correspondent, Huang Jiaying. Chen Lidong, Huang Jiaying's superior, the editor of *Xinguang Daily*, an organ of a provincial Party committee, insists that newspapers should reflect Party policies and resolutions or issues that are concerned with the Party. But Huang persists in reflecting the actual life and needs of the masses rather than the general situation of the country. As a result, most of her articles which are critical of higher level leadership or about the actual situations in life are considered as "too one-sided" (*News*, 2), or not concerned with the main tasks of provincial Party committee, and therefore they are rejected by Chen

Lidong and only allowed to be circulated among the staff of the newspaper as "inside news." Chen Lidong, who is as conservative as Luo Lizhen, tries every possible effort to make sure that the newspaper reflects the Party line. He proudly proclaims that: "I am loyal to the Party, and follow the Party's interests in everything" (*News*, 49). Even though "His most outstanding quality is that he doesn't make serious errors" (*News*, 49), in fact, like Luo Lizheng, he has tried to avoid making errors at the expense of the mass interest (*News* 42).

Ma Wenyuan, the director of the editorial office, who was once an idealistic intellectual, joined the Party in 1940 while he was an underground worker. After 1949, he worked as the head of the propaganda department. However, this stabilized and routinized work has worn out much of his revolutionary enthusiasm. Like Liu Shiwu in *A Young Man*, Ma is noted for his ability to cope with anything that he encounters by manipulating "some concepts and formulas" which he calls "laws" (*News*, 27), or by drawing "conclusions from giving things a quick glance over" (*News*, 27). Ma is pretty aware of his indifference and slackness, both being "the worst afflictions for a Communist Party member" (*News*, 26). And far from being a contrast to Chen Lidong, he is just another "yesman." He dare not exercise his independent thinking or express his own views; instead he takes "the Department head's directives as his own directives and the section members' reports as his own reports" (*News*, 26). This attitude is very common among the members of the editorial board, for instance, Zhang Ye, the head of the industrial affairs section, who also holds the same view as Chen Lidong that when an issue is raised in a newspaper, it should have

"the decision or directive from the Central Committee" (*News*, 37). This view is duly refuted by Huang Jiaying, who on the contrary, maintains that a newspaper should let "the Party and government hear what the people have to say" (*News*, 38). The only person who shares Huang's opinions is another editor in the industrial section, Cao Mengfei. Cao thinks that a newspaper should reflect living issues. However, his critical essays "on the rightist conservative thinking of cadres in the countryside" (*News*, 37), which share the same fate as Haung Jiaying's essays, are suppressed from publication.

In both of Liu's works, the responsible cadres rely on directives from higher levels. The difference is that, in *Bridge*, the bridge crews, like Luo Lizheng, carry out the instructions of the Bureau of the Engineering (the immediate superior), and they will carry out only those decisions or policies of the Central Committee that are accompanied by the order of the Bureau; if not, they simply ignore them (*Bridge*, 217-218). On the contrary, in *News*, the tendency of relying on directives from the Central Committe is very strong, and it is manifested in Huang Jiaying's remarks, who questions the "effectiveness" of doing every thing decided by the all-powerful Central Committee: "Can nothing go in the paper until the Central Committee has made a decision? . . . How can the Central Committee think of every little thing and decide everything?" (*News*, 37).

Also, in Liu's works, the Party does not play an active role in redeeming the degeneration of its members. In *Bridge*, the secretary of the Party committee of the Bureau of Engineering is informed of Luo Lizheng's shortcomings, and tries to promote Zeng Gang's work style

among the construction teams. However, when watchdog posts (one of Zeng Gang's innovations) expose instances of procrastination, negligence, and irresponsibility in the second construction team, Luo Lizheng, lest his weakness be exposed, quickly distorts the function of the watchdog posts: they are to supervise the workers instead of attacking the leadership (*Bridge*, 219). The Party secretary cannot do anything about Luo's reaction because of the so-called conventional constraint,[46] this probably refers to his inability or unwillingness to deal with the malpractices of cadre in a considerable high position. In *News*, the old provincial Party secretary, a bureaucrat himself, does not pay attention to the work style of the editorial board; the new one who takes over has applied pressure on Chen Lidong and indirectly hints that he should resign. But he does not show strong support toward Huang's initiative and creativity either.

These two works illustrate that because of the hierarchical structure of the system, the responsible cadres often respond only to their superiors rather than responding to suggestions or criticisms from their subordinates. This shows that the bureaucrats as an emerging class tend to protect the interest of higher ranking cadres and are less willing to affirm and promote young personnel at the lower level or cater to the interest of the public. No wonder the narrator in *Bridge* reacts with anger and frustration:

> I had thought that as this upsurge formed throughout the nation, the rejecting of conservatism would at least bring the conservatives to their senses . . . But I was wrong. The difficulty lay precisely in the fact that people such as Luo Lizheng put up no resistance to this tide; the difficulty lay in the fact that this was not solely a question of conservative thinking. . . . (*Bridge*, 227-228).

Certainly, the degeneration and demoralization of Party members was not "solely a question of conservative thinking"; it was more than that. In fact, besides individual attitude, the possible degeneration of the once revolutionary Party members was largely due to the adoptation of the Soviet-type bureaucratic system. And this is precisely the case as seen in Liu Shiwu, Wang Qinquan, and Han Changxin in *A Young Man*, Luo Lizheng and Zhou Weiben in *Bridge*, and Chen Lidong and Ma Wenyuan in *News*. All these bureaucrats are high-ranking cadres with an intellectual or professional background who hold important managerial posts. Because of their individual as well as group interest, they tend to protect their own and group interest. In this way, the Soviet-type bureaucratic system serves very well in preserving the interest of these types of Party cadres, especially those at the higher level. And this is only possible by reducing democracy at the grass-roots level and increasing powers at the managerial level. This system inevitably sows the seeds for the emergence of a professional-managerial-bureaucratic class, whose power is increasingly consolidated, and whose interests do not generally coincide, and are in many cases in conflict, with the interests of the masses. It is a social class, in the words of Arif Dirlik, "whose domination of society may be even more thorough than it is under capitalism due to the intensely bureaucratic nature" of the so-called "socialist state."[47]

Similar bureaucratic behavior can also be seen in Li Qing's story, "The Degeneration of Ma Duan," especially in the character Ma Duan. Ma, the director of an Organization Department of a Party committee of a county, is the embodiment of many of the weaknesses seen in certain

characters in Wang Meng and Liu Binyan's stories. Like Wang Qingquan, he was once a good soldier before 1949, but after 1949, he gradually becomes a degenerated cadre and he also indulges himself in playing chess. Like Han Changxin, he is keen at drawing up slick reports with the intention of fawning on his superior and covering up problems at the lower level. Like Lin Zhongqin, he lets his secretaries do the actual work for him. Worst of all, he always makes excuses that he has a headache, so as to avoid attending meetings. Even if he does attend some meetings, he often falls asleep. Although he has had little education, he has no intention of improving himself even he has been told to do so. Furthermore, he is jealous of other's success, discontented with his position, and always at odds with He Sheng, the deputy secretary of the County Party committee, his one-time subordinate (*Ma Duan*, 103).

He Sheng, a deputy secretary, who is relatively young and more capable is seen as a thorn in Ma's flesh. Like Lin Zhen, he is intolerant of Ma's irresponsible attitude. His criticisms of Ma are not only unacceptable by the latter, but also worsen their personal relationship. The Party secretary, Zhao, being more sympathetic towards Ma, suggests that the solution to pacify Ma's dissatisfaction is to promote him. Like Liu Shiwu and Han Changxin in *A Young Man* and Luo Lizheng in *Bridge* who place achievement above shortcoming, secretary Zhao also stresses that when criticizing Ma's weaknesses, one must first affirm his accomplishment (*Ma Duan*, 104). Even though Zhao finally succeeds in obtaining the promotion of Ma Duan, the latter does not improve his irresponsible attitude; instead, he resorts to harsh or

violent treatment towards peasants in order to accomplish his task (*Ma Duan*, 109). Also, like Zeng Gang in *Bridge*, who is transferred because of his critical attitude towards his superiors, He Sheng is transferred because of his critical comments towards his superior Ma Duan, and not because he is "not good at working independently" (*Ma Duan* 109).

As a Party secretary, Zhao is not only incapable of solving Ma Duan's problem, but also his approach towards Ma can be regarded as a sign of protecting the members of his social class, as do Han Changxin and Liu Shiwu, who try to protect Wang Qingquan. Like Wang Qingquan's case, Ma's problem has been dealt with only when it is intervened in by the higher level cadre, secretary Li of the local committee, who in turn is pressured by the masses and the revelation of a letter in *People's Dialy*. Thus, Ma Duan's failure is seen not only because of his personal attitude; he is both the product and the victim of the system, a system which is ineffective in dealing with its demoralized Party members. The responsible cadres take action only when there is greater pressure from outside.

The works of Wang Meng, Liu Binyan and Li Qing make obvious the effect of a highly centralized and over-routinized organizational system on the Party members, especially those who were once revolutionary cadres. Critics like Sylvia Chan argue that because "the Party has become a routinized institution [notably, after 1949], personal convictions and commitments of individual members simply do not matter any more. . . . [T]he success of a revolution also spells the death of a revolutionary and of a revolutionary Party."[48] This argument to a certain degree is valid, for routinization is one of the

characteristics of the Soviet style of bureaucratic administration. From the Yan'an era on, Mao recognized the problem of over routinization, and its "potential corrupting force on the organization and its participants."[49] Therefore, in an attempt to rectify the degeneration and the loss of revolutionary zeal among Party members, Mao initiated the Hundred Flowers Movement (mid-1956 to mid-1957), and called for mass criticism to rectify those degenerated and demoralized Party cadres.[50] He believed that mass criticism was a viable way to supervise and regenerate those degenerate cadres, and he urged: "Cadres must be supervised both from above and from below. The most important supervision is that which comes from the masses" and added that "We must let people fully express themselves."[51] Indeed, in an article, Mao had discussed twenty types of bureaucratic attitude, such as complacency, irresponsibility, fawning on one's superiors and insensitivity to his subordinates, issuing directives randomly, estranging oneself from the masses, and allowing revolutionary will to fade and degenerate.[52] This led him to wage a series of campaigns of this nature,[53] which were later to lead to the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution.[54]

Complicated problems arising from the existing system and the complexity of life as well are enough to disturb idealists like Lin Zhen and Zhao Huiwen in the story *A Young Man*, who are full of enthusiasm and aloof ideals such as the "Yan'an spirit," a set of values derived from the Yan'an era such as self-sacrifice and selfless struggle on behalf of the people, diligence, self-discipline, and frugality. They expect reality to be what they think it should be.

Zeng Gang in *Bridge*, Huang Jiaying in *News*, and He Sheng in *Ma Duan* are also representatives of the idealistic young generation. In the stories, the young idealists differ from the bureaucrats not only in age, but also in experience and positions. They are generally simple and naive, and lack sophistication and experience in life. Their courage and enthusiasm alone are very unlikely to bring any fruitful results in combating undesirable social phenomena.

However, Wang Meng, being more optimistic, leadership and Party-oriented than the other authors, had tried to let his character, Lin Zhen, gain "the guidance of the leadership" — Zhou Runxiang, the District Party Committee Secretary (*YM* 64, [32])[55] — hoping that by so doing, organizational inertia might be overcome. Nonetheless, Wang Meng had also acknowledged the limitations of his heroes, especially Lin Zhen, and was concerned about the "Lin Zhen type" of young people in real life; thus, in a letter, Wang said, "When I was creating Zhao Huiwen and Lin Zhen, I had not the slightest idea of making them heroes. I knew that they had faults and could not possibly win in the battle against bureaucratism."[56] Later, in an article, Wang also expressed that:

> I had not intended to portray Lin Zhen as a Nastya type of hero. In fact, I think that the characterization of Nastya is a bit too idealized, and that her success also comes a little too easily. I even intended to let Lin Zhen's experiences demonstrate that an educated Chinese youth who applies Nastya's approach to solve the contradictions within the Chinese Party, which has its own national characteristic, will ultimately meet with failure."[57]

There were also Soviet readers and critics who viewed the portrayal of Nastya as unrealistic because her success comes too easily.[58] A reader

commented that Nastya's character is certainly heroic, but he felt that this type of character did not move him as those "middle road" characters did. To this comment, the author, Nikolayeva, responded that, as far as Soviet history was concerned, there was not much distinction between a "middle road" character and hero, because yesterday's "middle road" character could become today's hero.[59] As to why Nikolayeva's novel received such a warm reception, the writer Valentin Ovechkin held that it was because many young people were of Nastya's age; they hoped to read works that were related to them, and Nikolayeva's work happened to fill their inspiration.[60]

In China, Wang Meng's *A Young Man* also received a wide attention at that time. There were many young people inspired by Lin Zhen, and wished to emulate him in the way Lin Zhen emulates Nastya in his "struggle."[61] Wang Meng was quite aware that the "struggle" in real life was much more difficult and complex than what Lin Zhen had read in *The Newcomer: The Manager of an MTS and the Chief Agronomist*. Thus, when a friend wished to imitate Lin Zhen after reading *A Young Man*, Wang Meng advised him not to, for he knew that Lin Zhen was not an ideal model to emulate. Some twenty years later, Wang Meng reiterated similar opinions:

> I have never been able to agree with the opinion that my Lin Zhen and Liu Binyan's Huang Jiaying are 'heroes of anti-bureaucratism.' Their view of life and society is simplistic, and their ways of dealing with things one-sided and over-confident.[62]

Indeed, life has always been complicated and difficult to comprehend, and it is much more difficult for inexperienced youth to do so. No wonder Wang and Liu and Li's stories end with problems unsolved. In

Wang's original draft, although Lin Zhen places his hope on the Party leadership, he is not sure whether those problems can be solved. Liu's *Bridge* has an obvious negative ending, with the only hope being that the spring wind might blow into the Crew Chief Luo's office. *News* ends without any final agreement on the admission of Huang Jiaying into the Party. Li's story ends with only having the cadres expressing their opinions.

The stories, especially *A Young Man*, do to a certain extent expose the "contradictions among the people." And Wang Meng, more than any other author, believed that the problem of bureaucratism lies in the people themselves, and that if the rank and file members of the Communist Party continue to keep alert on this problem, the problem will be kept at bay. However, as has been seen, the political system, the Soviet organizational structures is as much an important factor as personal attitudes in contributing bureaucratism.

As has been mentioned, the Soviet bureaucratic system placed its main emphasis on economic development; thus, managers like Wang Qingquan who control the factory in *A Young Man*, or the chief of the construction crew, Luo Lizheng in *Bridge*, and the editors, Chen Lidong and Ma Wenyuan in *News*, are more liable to respond to the economic demands of the central government than to the political demands of both the local Party organization and the masses. And the Party cadres themselves are in turn responsible to the higher-level Party organs and eventually to the same Party leaders who control the state and economic development of the country. Hence, those people at fault can be replaced by new people, but sooner or later, these newcomers will be

stepping into the shoes of those they have replaced, and the problem will come full circle. In the case of Wang Qinquan in *A Young Man*, the misbehaved Wang has been dismissed, but, in the words of Han Changxin: "Neither the Organization Department nor Comrade Lin Zhen are in a position to guarantee that there will be no second or third Wang Ch'ing-ch'uan [Qingquan]" (*YM*, 58, [27]). Similarly, there is no guarantee that there will be no second or third Liu Shiwu and Han Changxin, as long as the organizational structure remains intact.

The adoptation of the Soviet-type organizational system coincided with the old managerial hierarchy, the Confucian social order. The highly hierarchical and centralized structures of the system resulted in bureaucratisation and routinization. The over-concentration of power gave rise to authoritarian practice, abuses of power and arbitrariness on the part of the leadership. Furthermore, it was also the system which provided the breeding ground for the emergence of a bureaucratic privileged class, who tried to protect each other whenever their interests are at stake. All these aspects as reflected in the stories are quite comparable to the actual situation in China after 1949. In this respect, Paul Sweezy's penetrating observation of Chinese new society is not only significant but also relevant. He notes, "Bureaucratic and elitist practices permeated all sectors of Chinese society, including the economy, government, and education. They were very much in the tradition of age-old Confucian habits of thought and action and hence were easily assimilated by those newly in authority."[63] These phenomena are manifested in characters like Liu Shiwu, Wang Qingquan, Luo Lizheng, Chen Lidong, Ma Wenyuan, and Ma

Duan. All of these bureaucrats were once revolutionaries, full of ideals and enthusiasm, but they became corrupted in the process, when they were established in high positions. The behavior and attitude of the degenerated bureaucrats were in part to become the fulfilment of Mao's prediction on the eve of the Communist victory in 1949: "With victory, certain moods may grow within the party — arrogance, the airs of a self-styled hero, inertia and unwillingness to make progress, love of pleasure and distaste for continued hard living."[64] However, Mao's comment referred more to behavioral problems rather than to the political system. Perhaps it was understandable for Mao to view the problem in that way, because the Party was then struggling to build a new nation in general and socialism in particular. And the social consequences of the political system, especially after the adoptation of the Soviet model in the 1950s had not (or not yet) been manifested to a visible extent. Obviously, Mao's view that undesirable attitudes may grow within the Party, attitudes which were later to become reality, was duly noted by Wang Meng and other writers. Through their works, they present the problem of bureaucratism and the degeneration of responsible cadres as individual attitudes, and did not really probe into the root cause of the problem inherent in the existing socio-political condition of the time. Evidently, the degenerated bureaucrats in the stories were as much the products as the victims of the system itself — a system which was far from democratic.

As had been noted as early as 1904 by a revolutionary Marxist, Rosa Luxemburg (1870-1919), the main problem with the Leninist organization lay in its excessive centralism. It was a system which

demanded "blind subordination" to "the party center, which alone thinks, guides, and decides for all."[65] And she prophetically remarked that there is "no greater danger to the Russian party than Lenin's plan of organization. Nothing will more surely enslave a young labor movement to an intellectual elite hungry for power than this bureaucratic strait jacket . . . What is today only a phantom haunting Lenin's imagination may become reality tomorrow."[66] Indeed, as Maurice Meisner observes, "This 'bureaucratic strait jacket' was in fact to become political reality after the October Revolution of 1917" in the Soviet Union.[67] And it was also "to become political reality" for China after 1949. As has been noted, in the first few years after 1949, China had emphasized its economic development strategy with the slogan "Learn from the Soviet Union." However, as has been pointed out by Meisner, "Lenin's political policies after 1917 derived more from the authoritarian principles of his concept of party than from the libertarian and anti-bureaucratic strains of the Marxist tradition that he so eloquently evoked on the eve of the revolution and during the first months of the Soviet experience." He adds that "the seeds of bureaucratic degeneration were . . . present in the elitist Leninist conception of revolution and political organization."[68] Obviously, Lenin's revolutionary means were to contradict his revolutionary goals. Thus, despite Luxemberg's great sympathy for Lenin's revolutionary cause, she did not hesitate to point out the mistake of the means Lenin had employed. She asserted that "public control" and "mass initiative" are the prerequisites for establishing socialism. Otherwise, with general "repression of political life," the bureaucracy would remain

"the [only] active element." The result would be "the dictatorship of a handful of politicians" rather than "the dictatorship of the proletariat."[69]

The same dilemma confronted China after 1949, with its adoptation of the Soviet model of development, especially the Soviet economic policies which were based on the assumption that a high level of industrialization is a necessary condition for realizing socialism. However, what really mattered was not so much the economic efficiency which the Soviet development strategy might bring; it was the application of Leninist means to achieve the alledged socialist goals. To this respect, it seems that Meisner's observation on the Soviet political reality is not only comparable, but also applicable to the political reality in China. He remarks, "In the process, economic development, which was originally seen as the means to a socialist end, became the end in itself." This reality is also observed by Barrington Moore, who notes: "While the [Leninist] ideology of ends has been much modified or discarded, the ideology of means has had lasting importance."[70] Both Meisner and Moore's remarks are of particular significance in light of what has become the actual situation in China.

The significance of Wang Meng's *A Young Man* lies not only in its being able to reflect the social reality of China in the 1950s but also that of present-day China. The Organization Department in the story well serves as an epitome of the Chinese Communist Party organization, and it further provides the reader a glimpse of Chinese society as a whole. More importantly, the story deserves merit for presenting a multi-facetted anti-bureaucratic theme. The problem of bureaucratism

as reflected in the story not only haunted Chinese society at that time, it remains a great concern of Chinese people in the present day.

Notes

1 Mao Zedong, "Speech at Expanded Meeting of CCP Political Bureau," *Miscellany of Mao Tse-tung Thought (1949-1968)*, *JPRS*, 61269-1 (Feb. 20, 1974), 33. Scholars like D.W. Fokkema hold that Mao proclaimed this slogan on May 2, 1956, and that his speech was never published. It was through comments by famous literary figures such as Lu Ting-i (Lu Dingyi), Kuo Mo-jo (Guo Moruo), Mao Tun (Mao Dun) and others that the main points of the speech were revealed. More important was Lu Dingyi's (the Director of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party) subsequent explanation of the "Hundred Flowers" slogans on May 26, 1957. See D.W. Fokkema, *Literary Doctrine in China and Soviet Influence: 1956-1960* (Hague: Mouton & Co., 1965), 86.

2 See for example, Zong Pu (b. 1928), "Hong dou," (Red Beans), *RMWX*, 7 (1957), translated by Geremie Barme in *Fragrant Weed*, 195-228. It is a love story, in which a student is torn between whether to follow her political commitment for the new China emerging from the old political order around 1948, or her love for a handsome, talented, but selfish fellow-student who wanted to take her to the United States. This story certainly differs from the literature of Socialist Realism in its subject-matter.

3 For detailed definition of the term Socialist Realism see Chapter, 4, page 72.

4 See Chapter 2, page 4, and notes 2 and 3 of that Chapter.

5 See Chapter 2, note 3.

6 Qin Zhaoyang, editor of *RMWW*, pointed out that Wang Meng sent the story to *RMWW* in mid-June of 1956. See "Jiaqiang bianjibu tong zuojia de tuanjie" (Reinforce the Unity Between the Editorial Boards and the Writers), *RMRB* (May 8, 1957), 7.

7 Liu Binyan, "Zai qiaoliang gongde shang," (At the Contruction Site of the Bridge), *RMWX*, 4 (1956), 1-17. Translated as "At the Bridge Site" (extraction) by Philip Robyn, in Kai-yu Hsu ed., *Literature of the People's Republic of China* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 212-228. Hereafter quotations from this anthology will be cited as *Bridge*.

8 Liu Binyan, "Ben bao neibu xiaoxi" (The Inside News of the Newspaper), *RMWX* 6 (1956), 6-21; 10 (1956), 48-59 respectively. Translated as *Inside News* by Bennett Lee. See *Fragrant Weeds: Chinese Short Stories once Labelled as "Poisonous Weeds,"* ed. W.J.F. Jenner (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co., 1983), 1-70. Hereafter quotations of the story from this anthology will be cited as *News*.

9 Li Qing, "Ma Duan de duoluo" (The Degeneration of Ma Duan) (hereafter *Ma Duan*), *RMWX*, 2 (1957), 102-109.

10 Liu Binyan, "Guanyu 'xie yinan mian' he 'ganshe shenghuo'" (On "Writing the Dark Sides" and "Intervening in Life"), *SHWX* (Mar. 1979), 49.

11 Galina Nikolayeva, *The Newcomer: The Manager of an MTS and the Chief Agronomist*, tr. David Skvirsky (Moscow, n. d.) (hereafter *The Newcomer*). The Chinese version is known as *Tuolaji zhan zhanzhang he zong nongyishi*, which is a literal translation of the Russian title.

12 Wang Meng, "Guanyu 'Zuzhibu xin lai de qingnianren'" (On "The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department"), *RMRB* (May 8, 1957), 7.

13 Wang Meng, "A Letter from Comrade Wang Meng," *CB*, 459:40; "Wang Meng tongzhi de yi feng xin," *BJRB* (April 16, 1957), 3.

14 Rodolf Wagner, "The Cog and the Scout, Functional Concepts of Literature in Socialist Political Culture: the Chinese Debate in the Mid-Fifties," *Essays in Modern Chinese Literature and Literary Criticism*, ed. Wolfgang Kubin and Rudolf G. Wagner (Bochum: Brock Meyer, 1982), 366.

15 I cannot indicate the setting of the story, because with the exception of the naming of *Beijing Ribao*, the setting of the story is not specified. During the Hundred Flowers Period, many readers including critics took for granted that the District Organization Department in the story must be in Beijing; thus arose the controversy. However, the author himself still prefers to let the setting remained unnamed. For details, please see the issues involved in "typical circumstances" in Chapter 4, pages 75-78.

16 Wang Meng acknowedged that he was twenty-two when he wrote this story. See "'Zuzhibu xin lai liao ge qingnianren' suo tan" (Random Talks on "A Young Man Arrives at the Organization department) (hereafter *suo tan*), *Dushu* (Reading), 1 (1979), 90.

17 "Guanyu 'tuolaji zhan zhanzhang he zong nongyishi' de taolun" (The Discussions on "The Tractor Station Manager and the Chief Agronomist"), *Yiwen*, 1 (1956), 139-140. See also Kang Zhuo's speech in a conference discussing the three Soviet Novels, "Yonggan de jielu shenghuozhong de maodun he chongtu" (Courageously Disclose the Contradictions and Conflicts in Life), *WYB*, 3 (1956), 22.

18 Nikolayeva, *The Newcomer*, 25.

19 There was criticism directed at the "'Three-Copy' teaching method," whereby the teachers copied their notes from the Soviet teaching materials, and then copied them onto to the blackboard, which were in turn copied by the students. See Roderick MacFarquhar ed., *The Hundred Flowers* (London: Stevens & Sons Limited, 1960), 97.

20 According to A. Doak Barnett, the term "cadre" (*ganbu*) in Communist China today carries a variety of meanings. "In its broadest usage, it includes all those, both Party members and non-Party cadres, who hold any post as a functionary in the bureaucratic hierarchies in China, from top to bottom. The term implies roles of leadership and authority, but over the years it has been applied to an increasingly large number of people, so that now even those in low-level functionary posts are labeled 'cadres'." See Barnett's *Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power in Communist China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 39.

21 Wagner, "The Cog and the Scout," 367. According to Wang Meng, there are people who said that the name Liu Shiwu is a homophone of Liu *shi wu* 刘事务 (*shi wu* in Chinese means routine work), which means Liu is a "routinist." Wang denied this kind of analogy; he acknowledged that he did not even know of using homophones to name his characters at that time. Instead, he was making fun of his friends by changing their surnames and only used their names to name his characters. See *suo tan*, 91.

22 The Organization Department under the charge of the Secretariat is responsible for the administration of the Party members such as training, recruiting, ideological education, evaluation of policy performance and so on. See John Wilson Lewis, *Leadership in Communist China* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1963), 132.

23 Lin Zhen's remarks might have derived from Mao's speech, "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People," in which Mao emphasized that "Marxism can develop only through struggle, and this is not only true of the past and the present, it is necessarily true of the future as well. What is correct invariably develops in the course of struggle with what is wrong." See SW V:409 (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1977).

[24] Wagner, "The Cog and the Scout," 367.

[25] Lewis, *Leadership in Communist China*, 101.

[26] Lewis, *Leadership in Communist China*, 101.

[27] Mao, "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People," *SW*, V:386.

[28] Mao, "The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War" *SW*, 2:198 (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1975).

[29] Lewis, *Leadership in Communist China*, 85.

[30] Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 121. China adopted the Soviet model of development for several reasons. First of all, there was general faith that the Soviet Union was a "land of socialism" (it was generally assumed that the Soviet Union was a socialist state; whether it was or was not was never questioned), for it provided the only historical model for industrialization in an economically backward country under socialist state power. Another immediate and practical consideration was that the Chinese deemed Russia's economic aid and technological experience as important factors for industrial development, which China would never expect from the capitalist countries, especially during the cold war years; thus, assistance from a presumably socialist country was seen as more desirable. Lastly, it was out of Chinese national security concerns that it needed political alliance with the Soviet Union in a hostile international arena at that time. *Ibid.*, 119-121.

[31] Meisner, *Mao's China and After*, 125.

[32] Michel Chossudovsky, *Towards Capitalist Restoration?: Chinese Socialism After Mao* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1986), 77-78.

[33] Meisner, *Mao's China and After*, 48. See also Bill Brugger, *China: Liberation and Transformation, 1942-1962* (Totowa: Barnes & Nobel Books, 1981), 29-47.

[34] Franz Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 256.

[35] Meisner, *Mao's China and After*, 125.

[36] Msisner, *Mao's China and After*, 125.

[37] Meisner, *Mao's China and After*, 127.

[38] According to Lewis, "commandism is the offense of issuing direct orders, or passing on higher orders, without preparing the masses to understand and accept them." See Lewis, *Leadership in Communist China*, 85.

[39] Mao, "A Letter to Production Team Leaders" (Nov. 29, 1959), *CB*, 891 (Oct. 8, 1969), 35.

[40] Wang Meng, "On 'The Young Newcomer in the Organizationn Department'), 7.

[41] *Ibid.*

[42] Zeng Zhennan, *Wang Meng Lun* (On Wang Meng) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1987), 16.

[43] See for example, Li Yinhe and Lin Chun, "Tentative Discussion On the Struggle Against Vestiges of Feudalism in China During the Period of Building Socialism," *Lishi Yanjiu* (Historical Research), 9 (Sept. 15, 1979), 3-11, translated in *JPRS*, 74829: 29-42; "On the ideology of Feudalism," *WHB* (16 Sept. 1979), 1, 4, translated in *JPRS*, 74526: 9-16; "Sweep Away Feudal Ideology," *RMRB*, July 18, 1980, in *Beijing Review* (Sept. 8, 1980), 36 (Sept. 8 1980), 23-26.

[44] "A Symposium on Marxism in China Today: An Interview with Su Shaozhi, with Comments by American Scholars and a Response by Su Shaozhi," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 20:1 (Jan.-Mar., 1988), 26.

[45] Liu Binyan, "At the Construction Site of the Bridge," *RMWX*, 4 (1956), 3.

[46] *Ibid.* 11.

[47] "A Symposium on Marxism in China Today," 23.

[48] Sylvia Chan, "The Image of A 'Capitalist Roader' — Some Dissident Short Stories in the Hundred Flowers Period," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 2 (1979), 97.

[49] John Bryan Starr, *Continuing the Revolution: The Political Thought of Mao* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979), 167.

50 There are controversial opinions with regard to Mao's intention of initiating this campaign. Some hold the view that this campaign was a trap to reveal members of the opposition so that they could be dealt with in the Anti-Rightist Campaign. See Edward E. Rice, *Mao's Way* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972), 148. Others view the unleashing of this campaign as Mao's response to the Hungarian uprising in order to prevent a similar type of political revolt in China, but his being forced to tighten the grip when he realized that he had greatly underestimated the depth and breadth of the opposition. See *Mao's China and After*, 196. A more neutral argument holds that Mao used the criticism from without to push an increasingly conservative state and Party bureaucratic machine to conform to his ideas about restructuring the economy. See Bill Brugger, *China: Liberation and Transformation 1942-1962* (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1981), 152-173.

51 Harold C. Hinton ed., "The Socialist Education Campaign: The Twenty-Three Articles, 14 January 1965," *The People's Republic of China 1949-1979: A Documentary Survey*, 2:992 (Welmington: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1980). How far the mass criticism was successful is beyond the scope of my analysis here.

52 "Chairman Mao Discusses Twenty Manifestations of Bureaucracy," *JPRS*, 49826 (Feb. 12, 1970), 40-43.

53 The Rectification (*Zhengfeng*) Campaign (to rectify the work style among Party members and their loyalty to the Party) in 1942; the Three-Anti (*Sanfan*) Campaign ("anti-corruption, anti-waste, and anti-bureaucratism") in 1951; the Five-Anti (*Wufan*) Campaign ("anti-bribery, anti-evasion and leakage of taxes, anti-theft of state property, anti-skimping on work and cheating on materials, and anti-theft of state economic information") in 1952; and the Four Cleanings (*Siqing*) Campaign ("in which masses and lower level cadres were called upon to give a clean account of their political and ideological stand, family background, and financial situation; it is believed to have originated from a report by Zhou Enlai in December 1964 to the Third National People's Congress"), see Dennis J. Doolin and Charles P. Ridley, *A Chinese-English Dictionary of Communist Chinese Terminology* (Standford: Hoover Institution Press, 1973), 265, 7, 32, 133 respectively.

54 The Campaigns before the Cultural Revolution were relatively well organized; for instance, according to one Four Cleanings work team member, the Four Cleanings Campaign was a good one: unlike the Cultural Revolution, it was well-managed and under strict Party leadership. See Constance Squires Meaney, *Stability and the Industrial Elite in China and the Soviet Union* (Berkeley: Institude of East Asian Studies, 1988), 90. The Cultural Revolution which bagan with a wholesale assault on the Leninist Party, had ended up with the restoration of the Party in its orthodox form. Although it had overthrown Mao's more prominent opponents, it was very much characterized by factional struggle. See Meisner, *Mao's China and After*, 330-366. All these campaigns including the Cultural Revolution were better known as "revolutions from above," which were characteristic of the Maoist approach.

55 In the original draft, Zhou Fanxiang is portrayed as "a very admirable leading cadre" (*YM*, 49 [20]) — this sentence had been deleted by Qin Zhaoyang in the revised version ("The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department, 38). Qin further altered the image of Zhou by replacing Zhou's mild reaction towards Lin Zhen's criticism of the Organization Department (*YM*, 60) with Zhou's stern, cool and bureaucratic attitude. See *RMWX*, 9 (1956), 42 [29]. Wang Meng has been consistent with this attitude and viewpoint towards the Party and Party leadership. This can be seen in his later works such as "Bolshevik's Salute" ("Buli," *Dangdai*, 3:4-39, 1979) after his reappearance on the literary scene in the 1980s.

56 "A Letter from Comrade Wang Meng," 40; "Wang Meng tong zhi de yi feng xin," 3.

57 Wang Meng, "On 'The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department,'" 7.

58 "The Discussions on 'The Tractor station Manager and the Chief Agronomist,'" *Yiwen*, 1 (1956), 139-148.

59 *Ibid.*, 140-143.

60 *Ibid.*, 148.

61 Tang Dingguo, "Lin Zhen shi women de bangyang" (Lin Zhen is Our Model), *WYXX*, 12 (1956), 13.

62 Wang Meng, "Preface," *Frangrant Weeds*, viii-ix.

63 Paul Sweezy, *Post-Revolutionary Society* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1980), 90-91.

64 Mao, "Report to the Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China" (Mar. 5, 1949), SW, IV:374.

65 Rosa Luxemberg, *The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Maoism?*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1961), 88. The article quoted here under the title "Leninism or Marxism" was originally published in 1904 in *Iskra* and *Neue Zeit* with the title "Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy."

66 Luxemberg, *The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Maoism?*, 102.

67 Meisner, "Leninism and Maoism: Some Populist Perspectives on Marxism-Leninism in China," *The China Quarterly*, 45 (Jan.-Mar. 1971), 14.

68 *Ibid.*

69 Luxumberg, *The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism?*, 71-72.

70 Barrington Moore, *Soviet Politics—The Dilemma of Power* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950), 60.

CHAPTER 4

Controversy, A Common Phenomenon of Critical Literature in Contemporary China: "A Young Man" as a Case Study

Controversy over literature has been a common phenomenon in contemporary China, and it is especially blatant during the Hundred Flowers period (mid-1956 to mid-1957).[1] The Hundred Flowers period witnessed a vast output in literary creation as well as in literary criticism. The main controversy of this period arose over whether literature should persist in following the path of Socialist Realism and Mao Zedong's literary theories as outlined in the "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art,"[2] or whether literature shouldreflect the dark side of social reality, thus resembling the critical realism of nineteenth-century Western literature.

"Socialist Realism," according to the 1934 statutes of the Soviet Writers Union, "is the basic method of Soviet artistic literature and literary criticism, [and] demands of the artist a truthful, historically concrete portrayal of reality in its revolutionary development; whereby truthfulness and historical concreteness must be combined with the task of ideological reforming and education of the toilers in the spirit of socialism."[3] However, according to the 1954 statutes, there were two omissions: "historically concrete" was left out of the first part, more importantly, the entire second half had also been done away.[4] In the Soviet Union, there were critics such as Konstantin Simonov who held that the second half of the formula was inaccurate and may lead to misinterpretation, saying that: "It can be

understood as a reservation: yes, socialist realism demands of the artist a truthful portrayal of reality; whereby such portrayal must, however, *be combined* with the task of the ideological reforming of people in the spirit of socialism; i.e., truthfulness and historical concreteness *may* or *may not* be combined with this task: not all truthfulness and all historical concreteness serve this aim."[5] As for the case in China, Sylvia Chan maintains that Lu Dingyi, the first official exponent of the "Hundred Flowers" policy, still implied "a uniform political standard," might have adhered to the 1934 version of "Socialist Realism."[6] The characteristics of most Socialist Realist literary works are: a bright ending, the characters mostly consisted of heroes and villains with a black and white moral distinction, and the masses are often depicted as a progressive force tinted with socialist spirit.

Mao's literary theories were more inclined to Socialist Realism than critical realism.[7] In his opinion, "Literature and art are subordinate to politics, but in turn exert a great influence on politics . . . What we demand is the unity of politics and art, the unity of content and form, the unity of revolutionary political content and the highest possible perfection of artistic form."[8] Furthermore, Mao suggested that literature and art should serve the masses (namely workers, peasants, soldiers and urban petty bourgeoisie; these four kinds of people constituted the majority of the total population at that time), and should be popularized (especially the revolutionary ideas), so that they could be readily accessible to the masses, and would be appreciated and accepted by them. Since literature and art

are supposed to serve the masses, the criteria for raising the standard is essentially political. The same applies to Mao's criteria for literary and artistic criticism, which also includes the political and the artistic aspects.[9] Mao held that literature and art should be judged by their motives (subjective desires) and their effect (social practice).[10] Although artistic criteria might be used in judging literature and art, Mao maintained that at that particular time the political aspect should be given greater attention, because this area posed more of a problem.[11] As a whole, the "Yan'an Talks" are inseparable from the political climate at that time. In short, the relationship between literary works and revolutionary work in general as defined in the "Yan'an Talks" rested on the country's specific historical condition: prolonged civil war, armed revolution and foreign invasion.

During the Hundred Flowers period, there were quite a number of writers who advocated the use of "realism" in literature. According to M.H. Abrams, the goal of "realism" is "to present an accurate imitation of life as it is. . . . A thoroughgoing realism involves not only a selection of subject matter but, more importantly, a special literary manner as well: the subject is represented, or 'rendered,' in such a way as to give the reader the illusion of actual experience."[12] However, in China, in "realism" should not be understood in the Western sense. During the Hundred Flowers period, the first writer to coin the phrase "realism in the socialist era" was Qin Zhaoyang, who argued in favor of writing "realism" with a "socialist touch."[13] Qin tried to call his readers' attention to Western critical realism and its

relation with Soviet Socialist Realism. He argued that to overemphasize the "socialist" aspect of the Soviet formula would stifle the "realist" aspect. The latter, he believed, should play a critical role in a writer's work in accord with his own perception of life, rather than his socialist spirit. Qin's opinions were well received and were shared by young writers such as Liu Shaotang (b. 1936) and Cong Weixi (b. 1933), who held that "Socialist Realism derives its vitality from the depiction of the truth [reality]."[14] Both Liu and Cong also wrote several articles in support of Qin's position.[15] These writers believed that there was a dark side as well as a bright side to the "socialist" society, and that the main task of literature should be to expose the dark side, so as to "intervene in life" — a term borrowed from the Soviet Union.

In light of the controversy over Wang Meng's *A Young Man*, most of the debate involved the insistence in following Socialist Realism and Mao's literary theories on the one hand, and the writing of realism on the other hand. The criticism of bureaucratism in Wang's story coincided with the advocation of exposing the dark side of the society; therefore, it could be regarded as a critique of the bureaucratic functionaries. Because of its critical nature, the story and the author were subjected to severe criticism (along with other writers who had blossomed during the Hundred Flowers period) during the Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957-1958.[16]

The controversy over *A Young Man* triggered over 1300 responses within a period of four months.[17] However, it should be noted that the different viewpoints of the story tended to reflect the interests of

different social strata. In general, the controversy over Wang Meng's story can be summarized in three main points: 1) its criticism of dogmatism; 2) its use of fiction to reflect reality; and 3) its ambiguity. Again, all three of these points reflect the contention between Socialist Realism and critical realism.

The use of a dogmatic approach to criticize literary works was a common practice of the time, and the criticism of Wang Meng's *A Young Man* was no exception, especially in its deviation from the precepts of Socialist Realism. Critics like Chen Qitong (b. 1916), Chen Yading, Ma Hanbing, and Lu Le (members of the Armed Forces Propaganda Department) in their joint article, complained that less and less literature and art were concerned with workers, peasants, and soldiers, and that under the "Hundred Flowers" policy there even had been an attempt to replace "Socialism" with "realism."[18] They lamented that "the number of satiric articles which voice dissatisfaction and disappointment tends to increase."[19] They made concessions to the need for some variety in literary creation, however: "as a literary and art worker of the Party, [one] must persist in and publicize literature and art [in order] to serve the workers, peasants and soldiers as well as the Socialist and realistic way for writing."[20] This joint article thus made clear that literature which departs from the method of Socialism Realism is undesirable, thus it should be condemned. Ma Hanbing, in a separate article furthered his earlier argument by pointing out that in Wang Meng's story, the bureaucratism was very likely to happen in remote areas, but was unlikely to happen in Beijing where the Central Committee was situated. Wang's story was, therefore, questionable in

terms of its "typical circumstances" and "typical characters."[21]

"Typical circumstances" and "typical characters" are two frequent terms used by the Chinese critics; they come from Engels' letter to Margaret Harkness discussing realism. Engels said, "Realism, to my mind, implies, besides truth of detail, the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances."[22] These two terms, "typical circumstances" and "typical characters" were used by Engels in referring to Harkness's story, *A City Girl*. He commented that the characters in her story are "typical" enough, but that "the circumstances which surround them and make them act, are not perhaps equally so." He argued that depicting the working class as a "passive mass" might be correct during the period of Saint Simon and Robert Owen (around 1800). But by 1887 (the year when *A City Girl* first appeared), the working class had already accumulated fifty years of experience in the struggle against "oppressive" surroundings. Thus, the working class's attempts "at recovering [its] status as human beings" not only had great historical significance, but also, in his opinion, owned a rightful "place in the domain of realism."[23]

Li Xifan (b. 1930), a critic and a young Party member at that time, also criticized Wang Meng's story for its serious distortion of "typical circumstances" and thus its failure to reveal the truth of social reality.[24] However, there were also critics who defended Wang's story against Li Xifan, who centred his attack on the issue of "typical circumstances."[25] Liu Binyan defended Wang's story; he criticized Ma Hanbing for his dogmatic approach, especially Ma's attacks on works of social criticism such as *A Young Man*. Liu added that if Wang Meng were

to write according to Ma's suggestions then the story would not have been written at all.[26] In fact, the frequent use of Engels' thesis of the "typicality" of characters and circumstances by some critics in analysing the story was not only mechanical but also unconvincing. In this vein, Liu Shaotang and Cong Weixi's joint article could be seen as a refutation of the mechanical application of the term, "typicality." They argued that Wang's story drew an enormous response from its readers because of the author's "strict adherence to the realities of life."[27] Moreover, in real life, these types of phenomena are more serious than those in the story,[28] and Wang had faithfully and accurately reflected all the happenings that occurred there. Hence, both Shao and Cong held that Wang Meng did not "misrepresent the Party organization in a typical situation," because it is impossible to demand the author depict one Party organization according to the entire concept of the Party, for it would lead to formularization. Both Liu and Cong had high regard for the story, and strongly defended any groundless accusations against the author and his story, and pleaded with "writers, critics, editors, and readers to purge their subconscious of all philistine ideas about society."[29]

To the charges that the setting of the story must be in Beijing, and that it is not a "typical circumstance," Wang Meng replied that his choice of Beijing was merely a coindence; he "just happened to call the newspaper in the story, *Beijing Daily*."[30] The controversy over the story, especially the issue concerning "typical circumstances" received Mao's attention in his speech at the Enlarged Supreme Conference on February, 1957:

> There is this young author by the name of Wang Meng . . . who wrote a piece called 'A Newcomer in the Organisation Department' [A Young Man Arrives at the Organization Department]. . . . Some were for it, and others against [it]. They investigated and found out that he was a member of the Communist Party — a member of the Party directing blows against the Party. They said there was not a single thing about him that was any good . . . Some criticised him saying that Beijing is where the Central Committee is and to say that there is bureaucratism in a district Party committee in Beijing is to choose the wrong 'typical environment.' . . . To pick this place where we are is no good . . . I certainly haven't read anything . . . where it says that there will not be any bureaucratism where the Central Committee is located. If there can be bureaucratism within the Central Committee, then why not where it is located? . . . The error is with the critics who advance ideas like that.[31]

Mao certainly approved of the story. For in the same speech, Mao stated that "dogmatic criticism" would not resolve any problems, and if anything, would encourage the "growth of such things as weeds in Marxist garb." Obviously, Mao was trying to defend those young writers, including Wang Meng, "who produced what Mao himself regarded as perfectly acceptable critical works about such things as bureaucratism,"[32] because those "critical works" were in response to the Party's call to criticize bureaucratism within the Party. Mao was anti-bureaucratic, and this attitude was manifested as early as 1933 in his condemnation of "bureaucratic leadership" which was intolerable in any other "revolutionary work."[33]

It has been a common practice for contemporary Chinese writers to use fiction to address social problems. During the Hundred Flowers period, some critics affirmed this characteristic of the story. For instance, the poet Shao Yanxiang (b. 1933) praised Wang Meng's story for presenting life accurately. He maintained that the story exposed the "contradictions" within the Party and that the revolutionary vigor

and enthusiasm embodied in Lin Zhen signified that young people were the "strength of the Party." Thus, the value of this story lies in its "educational purpose" — to "cure the sickness and save the patient."[34] Tang Zhi (Tang Dacheng), an assistant editor of *Literary Gazette*, approved the characterization of Lin Zhen, Zhao Huiwen, and particularly Liu Shiwu. He said that these characters were represented in a lively manner, and they were familiar to the readers in that they could be found in real life.[35] Similar opinions were shared by another critic who analyzed *A Young Man* as an ordinary story reflecting actual life: the District Committee is just one of the many committes infested with bureaucratism; Lin Zhen is a typical youth with boundless energy, fighting against undesirable social phenomena; and Liu Shiwu is a lively figure who, like many bureaucrats, has shortcomings, though possessing certain positive characteristics.[36] One critic adopted another perspective, arguing that the old bureaucrats were easier to identify than the new ones, for the latter were shrewdly disguised under the new social order. Thus, he said that "we should be on the alert," for the "smell of Liu Shiwu can be found even in ourselves." According to this critic, Wang Meng's story has boldly "exposed the backward phenomenon that widely exists in our political life today."[37] As a whole, this group of critics commented favorably about the author as well as the story itself. Their argument more or less coincided with the advocation of writing "realism in the socialist era."

In the opinions of some critics, *A Young Man* had faults as well as merits. Chang Zhi (Li Changzhi) (1910-1978), a professor, claimed that the author deserves credit for breaking away from formularization and

conceptualization and using his story to intervene in life. However, he said, the author has a "naturalistic tendency" because he reveals the social phenomena to their fullest extent.[38] Chang Zhi's opinion was shared by another critic who affirmed the positive aspects of the story: its break with formalization through the use of a fresh theme; its more realistic subject matter which had a general significance; and its ablity to avoid conceptualization through the author's presentation of the theme in the portrayal of characters, the concrete environment and the plot. But, in his opinion, the defects of the story were also serious, because in depicting the bureaucracy, the author brought in unnecessary details which reduced the effect of the story. Also, with the exception of Lin Zhen's simplicity and courage, his whole image is unlovely; and it leaves a reader an impression that he is an unsociable, eccentric and peculiar person.[39] However, one critic viewed the story in another light, claiming that in real life, there was no shortage of Liu Shiwu-type individuals in the Party and state organizations. Nevertheless, he said, the characterization of those backward phenomena is not penetrating enough. Hence, the authenticity of the story suffers considerably.[40] In the eyes of these critics, though the story had, to a certain extent, reflected reality and achieved a certain degree of success, it was not without shortcomings.

There were also critics who held an almost totally negative view towards the story. For instance, Ai Wu (b. 1904), a writer, held that through the hero, Lin Zhen, the "world" in *A Young Man* seems full of degenerate characters. It is but a plague-ridden place; the only place which is free of plague is Zhao Huiwen's room. He added that to expose

defects in a society through the newspaper is acceptable, but to examine them in fiction is not very appropriate, for it tends to generalize the whole situation and leave the reader with the impression that there is no remedy to the problems. Thus, the only result is to leave people feeling pessimistic and depressed.[41] Zeng Hui, an army man, regarded the story as a distortion of reality. It satirized and mocked the Party as well as its leading cadres, because under the author's pen, there is not one person who is a positive character in the Beijing District Committee.[42] Another critic also held a similar opinion, saying that with the exception of Lin Zhen and Zhao Huiwen, other characters are negatively portrayed. Also, in his opinion, the Organization Department is depicted as a sluggish, routinized organ, full of dust and in a mess, implying that the Central Committee and the whole nation are in a similar state.[43] One critic viewed Lin Zhen as a zealot, full of vanity, who rejects everything that is undesirable to him. He suggested that, as a writer, Wang Meng should provide guidance for the young people and help them in their "struggle," rather than blindly extolling them. In this respect, Wang Meng did not meet his readers' expectations.[44]

These criticisms certainly did not fully appreciate Wang Meng's original intention and effort. According to Wang Meng, *A Young Man* is his attempt to expose "contradictions" among the people, so as "to call attention to the need of resolution of the contradictions, and not to defame anyone." Thus, he felt that "some of the complex, tortuous thought processes that had taken place during [his] writing of the story had not been appreciated" by his critics. Moreover, he thought

that "some of the criticisms seemed downright arbitrary."[45]

It is clear that the main argument of this last group of critics was rigidly dogmatic. It seems that most of them clung to the concept of Socialist Realism, and hinted that as a piece of literature, *A Young Man* should depict the bright instead of the dark side of the society. Furthermore, the author should consider the effect of his story on the society — an aspect which had been pointed out by Mao in his "Yan'an Talks." In response to those harsh criticisms, the author certainly did not feel comfortable. He remarked grievously:

> Some comrades are averse to writings that reflect the contradictions among the ranks of the people, and would bristle up as soon as they come across such writings. They consider a portrayal of objectionable [people] in official positions an attack on the whole class of [people] in similar positions, or even an attack against the new society. . . . [A] writer who writes about the internal contradictions of the people may be regarded as having libeled the Party or grumbled against the state if he is not careful."[46]

Obviously, accusation of literary works and their authors had become a frequent occurrence in literary circles in the 1950s. And Wang Meng's *A Young Man* was among those critical literary works to receive such a blow. As Qiuyun (Huang Qiuyun) (b. 1918), a writer and literary critic, had pointed out, "works criticizing the darker aspects of our society, its abnormality and unhealthiness . . . are condemned for distorting reality, slandering society, and attacking the socialist system. . . . At times, writers are falsely accused of the crime of deliberately maneuvering against the Party and the people."[47]

The third accusation made against the story was its ambiguity. Partly this was due to the alteration of the story, especially its

ending, by Qin Zhaoyang, the editor of *People's Literature*.[48] It should be noted that the revision of the original draft of a story was a common practice among the editors of different journals at that time. As had been pointed out by some editors themselves, they revised the stories because some of them were not up to standards and sometimes because of certain views held by the authors that the editorial board felt that they might be held responsible for. In order to avoid the trouble that they might encounter, they resorted to altering certain portions of the story.[49] However, it is obvious that Qin Zhaoyang's revision of the story was meant to improve its artistic quality, rather than its ideological content. In the ending of the original draft, Lin Zhen has become more mature, wiser, and more experienced in his work, and hence more affirmed in his commitment, while acknowledging his shortcomings and limitations. In short, he has faith in the Party and in the masses, as well as confidence in work and life (*YM*, 64, [32]). From a communist's point of view, Lin's commitment and confidence in his undertakings are considered as positive qualities. In the edited text, however, Lin is not as staunch and idealistic as he is in the original draft. Instead, in the concluding episode of the story, Lin not only expresses his concern for Zhao, but also has a feeling that he is falling in love with her. Still, Lin restrains himself from loving her lest he intrude upon Zhao's family, even though Zhao has an unhappy married life. Zhao, for her part, is reluctant and shows a sense of self-respect by maintaining her reserve despite Lin's approaches, thus indicating their impossible union.[50] Though the love episode may add color to the story, the personality of Lin Zhen as an idealistic young

communist is greatly weakened. Wang Meng did express his dissatisfaction with certain alterations, especially the concluding episode, for "it clearly becomes a tragic type of love story."[51] Qin Zhaoyang did apologize for his revision of the story; he also pointed out that Wang Meng had written a letter to the editorial board pointing out some technical problems. However, the letter was lost due to the negligence of the secretarial board. Qin himself was not aware of the letter before.[52] The changes in the ending of the story are very important, because they not only deviate from the author's original intention and his viewpoints, but also affect the personalities of the characters in the story, in particular Lin Zhen.

The discussion of the story in various journals reveals that part of the controversy was due to these changes. For instance, both Lin and Zhao are generally regarded as "positive figures" as compared with the other characters in the story; however, Wang Meng was accused of depicting them as having petty-bourgeois thinking; the relationship of Lin Zhen and Zhao Huiwen is also considered ambiguous and thus "unhealthy."[53] Lin Zhen is also regarded as lacking in high ideological conciousness in his alienation of himself from the masses, and his beliefs in personal "struggle."[54] Again, these judgements are based on the edited text, for in the original draft, Lin Zhen has shown his confidence in the masses as well as the guidance of the Party leadership.[55] Furthermore, it should be noted that the prevailing attitude of the time was that love between two young people must be combined with socialist commitment or socialist spirit, rather than being solely an expression of personal concerns. In the eyes of Wang

Meng's critics, this aspect was regared as highly essential. Wang Meng apparently failed to achieve this with his characters Lin and Zhao. Not only the characters, but also the author himself were accused of having petty-bourgeois sentiment.

The main discussion of the story was published in *Literary Study*, which concluded with more representative opinions from writers like Kang Zhuo (b. 1920) and Qin Zhaoyang. Kang Zhuo, while approving the exposure of bureaucratism, nonetheless criticized the negative aspects of the story as shown in Lin and Zhao's petty-bourgeois sentiment. Indeed, as the title of his article suggests, it is "A Story Full of Contradictions."[56] Qin Zhaoyang, who was responsible for the publication of the story, acknowledged that the portrayal of Liu Shiwu's character was successful to a certain degree but that the author did not explore deeply enough into the root of Liu's weaknesses. Furthermore, he commented that the weaknesses of Lin and Zhao were insufficiently criticized and that this was mainly due to the author's limitation in life experience, ideological consciousness and artistic accomplishment.[57] According to Merle Goldman, Qin's rather negative comments on the story in contrast with his earlier support resulted from his being under tremendous pressure from his critics "rather than [from] any genuine ideological change."[58] The charges against Qin were targeted at his revisions of Wang Meng's story and Qin's ideas expressed in the article, "Realism—A Broad Road."[59]

Noteworthy are the articles which represented the official evaluation. Xiao Yin, a senior writer invited by the editorial board of *Beijing Literature* to comment on *A Young Man*, argued that whether a

piece of work has produced a "positive effect" is dependent not only on its realistic portrayal of characters, but more importantly, on the interrelation between the characters, the lack of which becomes the defects of the story. Xiao Yin further claimed that Wang Meng's original intention was to use his story to criticize the "Lin Zhen-type" young people in real life, who superficially imitate the Nastya-type of "struggle." But in the end the author himself failed to rise above his characters. Instead, he unconsciously adopted the same attitude as that of Lin Zhen and Zhao Huiwen — the petty bourgeois-type of "justice" and "pure" ideas.[60] Wang Meng had also acknowledged the point that once a character appears on the paper, it is likely to assume an independent existence, beyond the author's control.[61] In another article, "On Writing Characters," Wang reiterates that there is a tendency for a character to exist on his own, independent of the author's will.[62] According to Xiao Yin, it was because of this contradictory intention on the part of the author that he was unable to successfully project his "positive ideas" onto his characters, Lin Zhen and Zhao Huiwen. Xiao also held that though the "Lin-and-Zhao-type" of "justice" did expose bureaucratism, it was unlikely to produce a "positive" effect on the society.[63] Xiao's opinion represented the orthodox view of the time, a view which demanded that a piece of literary work be not just a piece of literature itself, but also a socio-political treatise. This view was shared by the then Vice-Cultural Minister, Lin Mohan (b. 1913) who published his criticism in *People's Daily*.[64] Lin took a moderate approach. He affirmed the story and defended it against harsh

criticisms, but also criticized the author for displaying too much sympathy for Liu Shiwu. Furthermore, in Lin Mohan's opinion, Lin Zhen is not as staunch as he should be, this being mainly due to his narcissism. Lin Mohan's viewpoint, as Sylvia Chan rightly puts it, "was no doubt representing the position of the entire literary leadership on this controversy."[65]

Obviously, the controversy arose in different sectors of society, among writers, scholars, literary critics, young intellectuals, and even government and Party officials. While the opinions of these people varied, they all shared one similar view: a story should be didactic. It is not a coincidence that the Chinese Confucian tradition holds that literature should possess moral and political functions. It should also be noted that in a newly-established "socialist society," a writer is expected to be a social fighter or a social worker, rather than an artist in his own right. He is expected to deal with social problems with a positive rather than a negative attitude, and avoid solely expressing personal feelings. In short, a writer must show himself to "have social awareness, a desire to serve [his] society, and a belief in socialism."[66] Generally, this viewpoint dominates the controversy. However, as China moved into uncharted waters in building a "socialist society," there was, not surprisingly, a general disagreement among different special interest groups as to what constitutes the role of a writer as a social fighter and a social worker. This role was better defined after the Republican Revolution in 1911 and prior to the establishment of Communist China in 1949 where social contradictions were easily identifiable. According to Mao

Zedong, there are two types of social contradictions: 1) the contradictions between the people and the enemy, and 2) the contradictions among the people. However, the meanings of the words, "the people" and "the enemy" vary in content in different historical periods in China.[67] These different interest groups tended to protect their own interests. This phenomenon is duly reflected in *A Young Man*: the criticism of those bureaucrats in the Organization Department had offended those people who assumed similar positions in the society. Thus, they spared no time in counter-attacking the story and its author.

In real life, there must have been many Liu Shiwu-type bureaucrats who were once militant revolutionaries, who, after 1949, became "a body of full-time salaried administrators."[68] Unlike the old propertied classes, the position of this new social group in the new social structure is controversial, and, as Richard Curt Kraus notes, "their character as a social group remains ill-defined."[69] Because of the contradictory role of bureaucrats like Liu Shiwu in the story and Liu Shiwu-type bureaucrats in the society, it is little wonder the story has invited a vast variety of controversial opinions. The controversy illustrated that *A Young Man* did not portray what reality should be, but what it is, and thus departed from the convention Socialist Realism that provoked such a wide scale debate.

Clearly, most of the debate on *A Young Man* went beyond pure literary criticism. Many criticisms were concentrated on the social contradictions upon which the story dwelt and its effect on the society. There were not a few criticisms that were condemnatory or

thinly-disguised personal attacks. Some even went so far as to interpret the story as an indictment of the whole Communist Party. This leads one to suspect that those critics who embarked on the harshest attacks against the author and his story were mostly literary bureaucrats or Party functionaries with a vested interest. They only desired to see literature sing the praise of the new society and the ruling Party, and they were most sensitive to criticisms which were directed against the regime or the Party leadership. Their concern about the unflattering depiction was, at best, due to their belief that criticism might hurt the socialist cause; at worst, it was due to the fear that those criticisms would threaten their power and positions, as well as the privileges that they enjoyed. They justified their attacks on the story and its author by indirectly invoking the precepts of Socialist Realism or Mao's literary theories (though they did not explicitly mention them), or in the name of defending the prestige of the Party and its leadership as well as the "socialist" system.[70]

On the other hand, those who defended Wang Meng and his story were mostly writers such as Qin Zhaoyang, Liu Shaotang and Cong Weixi, who advocated the writing of "realism in the socialist era." They directly or indirectly negated Socialist Realism, a method which they thought demanded that writers embellish life rather than realistically portray it. They also implicitly denied Mao Zedong's literary guidelines expressed in the "Yan'an Talks," especially the political demand or criteria, which they regarded as having significance only to a particular historical period. Instead, they stressed the artistic criteria of the "Yan'an Talks." They also insisted that literature

should reflect the imperfections of the society, so as to rectify them. Indisputedly, most of these critics (the majority of them also being writers) agreed upon the idea that literature and art should serve politics and the people, but, to be more effective and convincing they should also combine political content with artistic quality.[71] Hence, this defense of Wang's story could be deemed as a common plea for a relaxation of literary control by the Party authority. In brief, most of the arguments dealt with the decision to pursue either the writing of Socialist Realism or critical realism.

Evidently, the advocates of writing in the manner of critical realism were placed in a disadvantageous position. This was because the general atmosphere of the time required that critics base their judgements mainly on the ideological content of a piece of work, rather than on its literary quality. It seems that Wang Meng's *A Young Man* did not meet the necessary official ideological requirement at that time, and his story was stigmatised as a "poisonous weed" when the Hundred Flowers Movement turned abruptly into the Anti-Rightist Campaign. On June 8, 1957, an editorial in the *People's Daily* signaled the end of the Hundred Flowers Movement, this was followed by the Anti-Rightist Campaign.[72] Mao was said to be supportive of the termination of the Hundred Flowers Movement. In order to distinguish "fragrant flowers" from "poisonous weeds, "Mao laid down six criteria in his revised text of "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People," to judge whether a person's words and deeds were beneficial (1) to the unity of Chinese People, (2) to "socialist transformation" and "construction," (3) to the "people's democratic

dictatorship," (4) to "democratic centralism," (5) to the "leadership of the Communist Party" and (6) to the unity of other socialist countries and "peace-loving people" in the world.[73] However, as Sylvia Chan puts it, "The six criteria are supposed to be guidelines for defining "poisonous weeds" but there is no guideline to distinguish antagonistic "poisonous weeds" from non-antagonistic "poisonous weeds." The ambiguity of the six criteria easily led to arbitrary intepretation. Thus, with the exception of a few, many "poisonous weeds" were treated as antagonistic. By 1958, Zhou Yang (1908-1989) declared that *all* "poisonous weeds" were antagonistic.[74] However, according to Wang Meng in the "preface" to *Fragrant Weeds*, those "poisonous weeds" were the authors' first attempt to present a "mild and well-intentioned" criticism, "to point out some distressing things in the Party and in the people's heads." Consequently, those works were criticized and attacked. However, Wang magnanimously professed that:

> I am quite sure that many who took part in the attacks on the stories (including *A Young Man*) were good and enthusiastic comrades but also naive. I am also sure that those people honestly believed that if all writing that showed the less palatable aspects of our society was condemned, life would somehow become more satisfactory. They regarded warnings given to a basically healthy person with an infection as more dangerous than the infection itself. . . . Even if we do not take these writings as . . . warnings but see them as the cries of an owl [traditionally a bird of ill-omen in China], then could we expect to escape the misfortunes its cries augured by doing away with the owl?[75]

Certainly, "the misfortunes" did not escape when "the owl" had been done away with — Wang Meng was "capped" as "rightist" in 1958,[76] and like many Party writers, he was also expelled from the Party in the

same year.[77] Wang Meng and other contemporary writers labelled as "rightists" were forced into virtual silence for more than twenty years after the Anti-Rightist Campaign. However, social evils did not disappear simply because writers were silent; instead, they grew by leaps and bounds, and were evident in those "flowers" which blossomed during the second "Hundred Flowers" period in the post-Mao era.[78] Of course, the blossoming of the second "Hundred Flowers" was made possible only after the "new leadership" had reached a decision to rehabilitate all those who were labelled as "rightists" during the Anti-Rightist Campaign,[79] especially writers and artists, and to reevaluate their works. Wang Meng's *A Young* was among those works that have been rehabilitated.[80] After Wang Meng and other writers had been restored in 1979, they once again actively blossomed and were still critical in their appraisal of the "socialist" reality.[81] However, it would be irrational to simply regard Wang Meng and other writers labelled as "rightists" in 1957 as "dissidents." They not only "refused to acknowledge that they should be called dissidents,"[82] but also constantly proclaimed their unforsaken faith towards the Party. Indeed, as Richard King points out, "Both in 1957 and 1979, their [Wang Meng and other "rightists"] posture was one of extreme, even romantic, loyalty to the Communist Party as they perceived it, and . . . they did not hesitate to point out defects in its current practice."[83] And this is especially true for Wang Meng. To him, "the Party was after all a great and glorious Party, and must ultimately take the correct line."[84] The criticism of bureaucratism as presented by *A Young Man* was misrepresented as "an attack against the new society," as was its

author for having "libeled the Party." Instead, it should have been viewed as a medical prescription for the Party rather than an indictment against it. Indeed, the long ban on the "poisonous weeds" (including *A Young Man*) created a widespread interest among people of diverse views.[85] Those "poisonous weeds" are now known as "fragrant weeds," and have been reissued in a collection entitled *Fresh Flowers Bloom Again*.[86] Most of the stories from this collection are translated in *Fragrant Weeds—Chinese Stories Once Labelled as "Poisonous Weeds."*[87]

Indeed, in light of modern Chinese history, the controversy over *A Young Man* was an important literary as well as political event. It was a unique and significant product of the Hundred Flowers Movement. This movement, together with the subsequent Anti-Rightist Campaign, has provided a valuable, yet painful lesson for the present.

Notes

1 For a detailed analysis of writers and literary critics who bloomed in the Hundred Flowers Movement, see Merle Goldman, *Literary Dissent in Communist China* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 158-202.

2 Mao, Tse-tung, "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art," *SW*, III:69-97 (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967). See also Bonnie S. McDougall, *Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art": A Translation of the 1943 Text with Commentary* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1980), 57-86. According to Wang Defen, Xiao Jun's (a writer, 1907-1988) wife, the idea of providing literary guidelines for writers and artists was suggested by Xiao Jun to Mao Zedong in Yan'an early in the 1940s. The guidelines were the product of collective opinions from political leaders as well as writers, artists, and literary and artistic workers, and were delivered by Mao in his introduction speech addressed to the Yan'an Forum on May 2 of 1942. See Wang Defen, "An xi ba, Xiao Jun lao ban!" (May You Rest in Peace, My Old Partner!), *Xinwenxue shiliao* (Historical Materials for New Literature), 2 (1989), 107. Mao also addressed the concluding speech of the Forum on May 23.

3 From the *First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, 1937: Stenographic Report* (Moscow, 1934), 666. The translation is based on Walter N. Vickery, *The Cult of Optimism: Political and Ideological Problems of Recent Soviet Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana Universitry, Press, 1963), 70.

4 *Ibid.* See also Harold Swayze, *Political Control of Literature in the USSR, 1946-1959* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), 113-114.

5 Quoted by Walter Vickery, *ibid.* According to Vickery "Historically concrete" was reinserted at the Third Writers' Congress in 1959, but not the second half of the formula. See *ibid.*, note 29.

6 Sylvia Chan, "The Blooming of a 'Hundred Flowers' and the Literature of the 'Wounded Generation,'" *China Since 'The Gang of Four,'* ed. Bill Brugger, (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1980), 186. See alos Lu Ting-i (Lu Dingyi), "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom, Let a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend," Hualing Nieh ed., *The Literature of the Hundred Flowers: Criticism and Polemics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), I:19-43.

7 Mao, *SW*, III:91-94.

8 Mao, *SW*, III:86, 90.

9 Mao, *SW*, III:88.

10 Mao, *SW*, III:88.

11 Mao, *SW*, III:90.

12 M.H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 4th. Edition (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981), 153.

13 He Zhi (pseudonym of Qin Zhaoyang [Ch'in Chao-yang]), "Xianshi zhuyi—guangkuo de daolu: dui yu xianshi zhuyi de zai renshi (Realism—A Broad Road: A Reassessment of Realism), *RMWX*, 9 (1956), 1-13; Translated as "The Broad Road of Realism: A Reassessment of realism," in *The Literature of the Hundred Flowers*, I:121-144.

14 Liu Shaotang (Liu shao-t'ang) and Cong Weixi (Ts'ung Wei-hsi), "Xie zhenshi—shehui zhuyi xieshi zhuyi de shengming hexin" (Writing the Truth: the Essence of Socialist Realism), *WYXX*, 1 (1957), 17-18; *Literature of the Hundred Flowers*, II:523-526.

15 Liu Shaotang (Liu shao-t'ang), "Xianshi zhuyi zai shehui zhuyi shidai de fazhan" (The Development of Realism in the Socialist Era), *BJWY*, 4 (April 1957), 9-11; *Literature of the Hundred Flowers*, I:145-154. Liu Shaotang (Liu Shao-t'ang), "Wo dui dangqian wenyi wenti de yixie qianjian" (Some Thoughts on Literary Problems Today), *WYXX*, 5 (1957), 7-10; *Literature of the Hundred Flowers*, I:63-71. Cong Weixi "Dui 'shehui zhuyi xianshi zhuyi' de jidian zhiyi" (Several Questions Concerning "Socialist Realism"), *BJWY*, 4 (1957), 6-8.

16 For a detailed analysis of the Anti-Rightist Campaign against writers, see Merle Goldman, *Literary Dissent in Communist China*, 200-242. For a general account of the Anti-Rightist Campaign, see Roderick Macfarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), I:261-310; *Mao's China and After*, 192-200; Bill Brugger, *China: Liberation and Transformation, 1942-1962*, 162-164.

17 See the editor's notes, *WYXX*, 3 (1957), 8.

18 Chen Qitong (Ch'en Ch'i-t'ung), Chen Yading (Ch'en Ya-ting), Ma Hanbing (Ma Han-ping) and Lu Le, "Women dui muqian wenyi gongzuo de jidian yijian" (Some of Our Views on Current Literary and Art Work), *RMRB* (Jan. 7, 1957), 7; *CB*, 452 (May 31, 1957), 1.

19 *Ibid.*, *RMRB*, (Jan. 7, 1957), 7; *CB*, 452 (May 31, 1957), 2.

20 *Ibid.*, *RMRB*, (Jan. 7, 1957), 7; *CB*, 452 (May 31, 1957), 1.

21 Ma Hanbing, "Zhunque di qu biaoxian women shidai de renwu," (One Should Accurately Portray the People in our Era), *WYXX*, 2 (1957), 16-18.

22 *Marx & Engels on Literature & Art: A Selection of Writings*, ed. Lee Baxandall & Stefan Morawski (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1973), 114.

23 *Marx & Engels on Literature & Art*; 114-115.

24 Li Xifan, "Ping 'Zuzhibu xin lai de qingnianren'" (On "The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department"), *WHB* (Feb. 9, 1957), 3.

25 Xu Kai, "Guanyu 'Zuzhibu xin lai de qingnianren' de taolun "(On the Discussions on "The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department"), *GMRB* (Mar. 2, 1957), 3; Zhou Peitong, Yang Tiancun and Zhang Baohua, "'Dianxing huanjing' zhiyi: yu Li Xifan tongzhi shangque" (Questions Concerning the notion of "Typical Circumstances": A Discussion with Comrade Li Xifan), *GMRB* (Mar. 9, 1957), 3.

26 Liu Binyan (Liu Pin-yen), "Dao shi wuqing que youqing" (The Presence of Feeling in the Absence of Feeling), *WYXX*, 3 (1957), 13-17; Nieh Hualing ed. *Literature of the Hundred Flowers, Vol. II: Poetry and Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 353-544.

27 Liu Shaotang (Liu Shao-t'ang) and Cong Weixi (Ts'ung Wei-hsi), "Xie zhenshi: shehui zhuyi xianshi zhuyi de shengming hexin" (Writing the Truth: The Essence of Socialist Realism), *WYXX*, 1 (1957), 17, *Literature of the Hundred Flowers*, II:523.

28 *Ibid.*, *WYXX*, 1 (1957), 17; *Literature of the Hundred Flowers*, II:524.

29 *Ibid.*, *WYXX*, 1 (1957), 18; *Literature of the Hundred Flowers*, II:524, 526.

30 "A Letter from Comrade Wang Meng," 41; "Wang Meng tongzhi de yi feng xin," 3. Some twenty years later, Wang Meng said that if he had been more prudent, things might have been better, and there might not have been so many loose ends for critics to capitalize on. See *suo tan*, 90.

31 Michael Schoenhals, "Original Contradictions — On the Unrevised Text of Mao Zedong's 'On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People,'" *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 16 (1986), 105-106.

32 Schoenhals, "Original Contradictions," 105.

33 Mao Zedong, "Pay Attention to Economic Work," SW, I:134.

34 Shao Yanxiang (Shao Yen-hsiang), "Qu bing he ku kou" (Curing Sickness with Bitter Medicine), *WYXX*, 1 (1957), 19-21; *Literature of the Hundreds Flowers*, II:527-532.

35 Tang Zhi (Tang Dacheng), "Tan Liu Shiwu ji qita" (On Liu Shiwu and Others), *WYXX*, 3 (1957), 9-12.

36 Lin Ying, "Shenghuo de jiliu zai benteng" (The Surging Torrent of Life), *WYXX*, 12 (1956), 6-8.

37 Wang Dongqing, "Shengdong di jielu xinshi guanliao zhuyi de zuilian" (The Ugly Faces of the New Bureaucrats are Vividly Exposed), *WYXX*, 12 (1956), 12.

38 Chang Zhi (Li Changzhi), "Kexi de zuopin, tongshi shi you yanzhong quedian de zuopin" (A Heartening Work, But Also a Work of Serious Shortcomings," *WYXX*, 1 (1957), 14.

39 Zhao Jian, "Shang le huaban de huaduo" (Wounded Petals), *WYXX*, 1 (1957), 19.

40 Du Lijun, "Zuopin zhong de zhenshi wenti" (The Question of Truthfulness in Fiction), *WYXX*, 2 (1957), 9-11.

41 Ai Wu, "Du le 'Zuzhibu xin lai de qingnianren' de ganxiang" (The Impression after Reading "The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department"), *WYXX*, 3 (1957), 23-25.

42 Zeng Hui, "Yi pian yanzhong waiqu xianshi de xiaoshuo" (A Story that Seriously Distorts the Reality), *WYXX*, 12 (1956), 8-10.

43 Yi Gen, "Bu jiankang de qingxiang," (An Unhealthy Tendency), *WYXX*, 1 (1957), 18-19.

44 Wang En , "Lin Zhen zhide women de tongqing ma?" (Is Lin Zhen Deserved our Sympathy?), *WYXX*, 12 (1956), 11-12.

45 "A Letter from Comrade Wang Meng," 41, 40; "Wang Meng tongzhi de yi feng xin, 3.

46 "A Letter from Comrade Wang Meng," 41; "Wang Meng tongzhi de yi feng xin, 3.

47 Qiuyun (Huang Ch'iu-yün [Qiuyun]), "Ci zai na li?" (Where are the Thorns?), *WYXX* (June 1957), 8-10; *Literature of the Hundred Flowers*, I:75-80.

48 In the conference "Jiaqiang bianjibu tong zuojia de tuanjie" (Reinforce the Unity Between the Editorial Boards and the Writers), Qin Zhaoyang, the editor of *RMWX*, acknowleged that he made some minor changes in Wang Meng's original draft for reasons of diction or phrasing and also expanded or reduced the text of the story, especially its concluding part: the last four paragraphs were almost entirely changed by the editor. See *RMRB* (May 8, 1957), 7. See *RMRB* (May 8 and May 9, 1957), 7.

49 *Ibid.*

50 "The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department," *RMWX*, 9 (1956), 43, [31-32].

51 "Reinforce the Unity Between the Editorial Boards and the Writers," *RMRB* (May 9, 1957), 7.

52 "Reinforce the Unity Between the Editorial Boards and the Writers," *RMRB* (May 8, 1957), 7.

53 Zeng Hui "A Story that Seriously Distorts Reality," 9; Peng Hui, "Wo dui 'Zuzhibu xin lai de qingnianren' de yijian" (My opinions on "The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department"), *WYXX*, 1 (1957), 16; Du Lijun, "The Question of Truthfulness in Fiction," *ibid.*, 2 (1957), 11; Jiang Guozeng, "Yao shishi qiu shi de fenxi zuopin" (To Objectively Analyze the Story), *ibib.*, 14. Obviously, the accusations made of Lin and Zhao are based on judgements of the edited text, especially the ending of the story.

54 Li Bin, "Zhenshi ne, haishi bu zhenshi?" (True or False?), *WYXX*, 12 (1956), 13; Dai Hongsen, "Yige quwei ganbu de yijian" (The Opinions of a Cadre in the District Committee), *WYXX*, 1 (1957), 17; Yi Gen, "An Unhealthy Tendency," *WYXX*, 1 (1957) 18; Ai Keen, "Lin Zhen jiujing xiang Nuo Si Jia xue dao le xie shenmo?" (What did Lin Zhen Actually Learn from Nastya?), *WYXX*, 2 (1957), 15.

55 See Wang Meng, "A New Young Man Arrives at the Organization Department," *CB*, 459 (1957), 28, 32 for notes 20 and 22 respectively.

56 "Kang Zhuo (K'ang Cho), "Yi pian chongman maodun de xiaoshuo" (A Story Full of Contradictions), *WYXX*, 3 (1957), 16-22; Translated as "A Contradictory Story" in *Literature of the Hundred Flowers*, 2:545-563.

57 Qin Zhaoyang (Ch'in Chao-yang) "Dadao de he meiyou dadao de" (Hits and Misses), *WYXX*, 3 (1957), 6-8; *Literature of the Hundred Flowers*, 2:518-522. Qin also wrote another article "On 'Writing the Truth,'" criticizing those writers, especially the younger ones, who abused the words "writing the truth" to express their own views or personal sentiment. Instead, he now indirectly upheld the writing of Socialist Realism, and rejected his own ideas of writing realism six month earlier. See "Guanyu 'Xie Zhenshi,'" (On "Writing the Truth"), *RMWX*, 3 (1957) 1-3.

58 Goldman, *Literary Dissent in Communist China*, 185.

59 See for instance, Li Xifan's article, "Sowei 'ganyu shenghuo,' 'xie zhenshi de shizhi shi shenmo?" (What Is at the Bottom of Such Concepts as "Intervening in Life" and "Writing the Truth"?), *RMWX*, 11 (1957), 104.

60 Xiao Yin, "Dongji he xiaoguo weishenmo fasheng le maodun?" (Why is there Contradiction between the Motive and the Effect?), *BJWY*, 3 (1957), 3.

61 Wang Meng, "On 'The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department,'" 7.

62 Wang Meng, "Guanyu xie renwu" (On Writing Characters), *BJWY*, 4 (1957), 2-3.

63 Xiao Yin, "Why there is Contradiction between the Motive and the Effect?" *BJWY*, 3 (1957), 3.

64 Lin Mohan, "Yi pian yinqi zhenglun de xiaoshuo" (A Story that Gives Rise to Controversy), *RMRB* (Mar. 12, 1957), 7.

65 Sylvia Chan, "The Image of A 'Capitalist Roader'," 89. Chan has an excellent discussion on Lin Mohan's article. See *ibid.*, 89-91.

66 Hualing Nieh ed., *Literature of the Hundred Flowers*, 1:10.

67 For details see Mao, "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People," *SW*, V:384-385.

68 Richard Curt Kraus, *Class Conflict in Chinese Socialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 4.

69 Kraus, *Class Conflict in Chinese Socialism*, 4; Maurice Meisner also holds that Mao's analysis of this phenomenon was "theoretically ill-developed." See Meisner's *Mao's China and After*, 324.

70 See for examples, Zeng Hui, "A Story that Seriously Distorts Reality," *WYXX*, 3 (1957), 8-10; Yi Gen, "An Unhealthy Tendency," *WYXX*, 1 (1957), 18-19.

71 Qin Zhaoyang (Ch'in Chao-yang), "Realism—A Broad Raod," *RMWX*, 9 (1956), 4-5; *Literature of the Hundred Flowers*, I: 129-130. Liu Shaotang (Liu Shao-t'ang), "The Dvelopment of Realism in the Socialist Era," *BJWY*, 4 (April 1957), 11; *Literature of the Hundred Flowers*, I:152.-153. Liu Shaotang (Liu shao-t'ang), "Some Thoughts on Literary Problems Today," *WYXX*, 5 (1957), 8-9; *Literature of the Hundred Flowers*, I:66-69. Cong Weixi, "Several Questions Concerning 'Socialist Realism,'" *BJWY*, 4 (1957), 7-8.

72 See Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After*, 192. See Bill Brugger, *China: Liberation and Transformation, 1942-1962*, 161.

73 Mao, "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People," *SW*, V:412.

74 Sylvia Chan, "The Blooming of a 'Hundred Flowers' and the Literature of the 'Wounded Generation,'" 187.

75 Wang Meng, "Preface," *Fragrant Weeds*, vii-ix; "'Xiang cao ji' xu," *RMRB* (Feb. 21, 1981), 8.

76 Wang Meng, "Qingting shenghuo de shengxi" (Listen to the Rhythm of Life), *Wenyi Yanjiu* (Literature and Art Studies), 1 (1982), 39.

77 Wang Meng, "Lishi zai zhuangyan di qianjin," (History is Advancing Solemnly), *GMRB* (Sept. 12, 1982), 4.

78 Hua Guofeng, then Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, announced the Party's decision to revive the policy of "letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend." See "Quarterly Chronicle and Documentation," *The China Quarterly*, 72 (Dec. 1977), 873.

79 "Uncapped all the Rightist Elements in the Whole Country," 1.

80 "Gei pi cuo de zuopin he shou pohai de zuojia pingfan" (To Rehabilitate the Wrongly Accused Literary Works and the Persecuted Writers), *RMRB* (Dec. 23, 1978), 1. See also "Quarterly Chronicle and Documentation," *The China Quarterly*, 80 (Dec. 1979), 891.

81 See for example, Wang Meng, "Youyou cun cao xin" (A Fervent Wish), *SHWX* (Sept. 1979), 4-16; *Fiction Monthly*, 3 (1980), 37-44. Liu Binyan "Ren yao zhi jian" (Between Demon and Human), *RMWX* 9 (1979), 83-102.

82 Leo Ou-fan Lee, "My Interviews with Writers in the People's Republic of China: A Report," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews*, 3:1 (Jan. 1981), 138.

83 Richard King, "'Wounds' and 'Exposure': Chinese Literature after the Gang of Four," 83.

84 Wang Meng, "The Butterfly," *Shiyue*, 4 (1980), 22; *The Butterfly and Other Stories*, 70.

85 Wang Meng, "Preface," *Fragrant Weeds*, viii; *RMRB* (Feb. 21, 1981), 8.

86 *Chongfang de xianhua* (Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi chubanshe, 1979).

87 W.J.F. Jenner ed., tr. Geremie Barme and Bennett Lee, *Frangrant Weeds — Chinese Short Stories Once Labelled as "Poisonous Weeds"* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co., 1983).

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

Wang Meng's *A Young Man* effectively shows that the Chinese reception of the highly centralized Soviet model of the organizational system brings about a series of negative social consequences such as routinization, bureaucratism, authoritarian practices and abuse of power. These phenomena as reflected in the story mirror the actual socio-political reality in China. The story illustrates that this system is ineffective in dealing with these social problems. It only helps to build up a bureaucratic class who is more conscious of its own interest than it is of the needs and demands of the public. The degenerate bureaucrats as represented by Liu Shiwu, Wang Qingquan and Han Changxin in *A Young Man*, Luo Lizheng in *Bridge*, Chen Lidong and Ma Wenyuan in *News*, and Ma Duan in *Ma Duan* are typical products of the system.

Wang Meng's *A Young Man* also resembles Galina Nikolayeva's *The Newcomer* in certain aspects. Both concern a young newcomer who finds his superiors' bureaucratic practices intolerable, but the latter story is typically Socialist Realist, the former a work of critical realism though not without a "socialist" touch. This basic difference shows the differing degree of "truthfulness" in the two stories. Wang Meng's story is more realistic in that it depicts the "contradictions" inherent in the society, which could not possibly be solved by a few individuals. These "contradictions" have more to do with the existing socio-political order, the Soviet organizational system which the

Chinese had borrowed. China had also borrowed the Soviet literary concept, Socialist Realism. Socialist Realism was considered the orthodox method of literary creation since the 1950s; any deviation from it would provoke possible criticism from the literary circle. The widespread controversy over *A Young Man* was a typical example. The story is not a conventional morality story with black and white characters, as most works of Socialist Realism. All the characters have weaknesses, varying only in matters of degree. The bureaucrats like Wang Qingquan and Liu Shiwu, though degenerate, were once revolutionaries and capable officials. The idealists like Lin Zhen and Zhao Huiwen are not without faults. They are enthusiastic and idealistic, yet they are simplistic and naive. Most of the characters belong to the category of "middle character,"[1] a term devised by Shao Quanlin (1906-1971) in the early 1960s. Wang Meng's characters are certainly a bold challenge to the conventional Socialist Realist literature.

Although Wang Meng's *A Young Man* was written during the Hundred Flowers period, this did not exempt him from facing a political penalty once the Hundred Flowers Movement turned into the Anti-Rightist Campaign. Wang Meng and many other writers who "bloomed" during this period were labeled as "rightists" and were silenced for more than two decades. They were not rehabilitated until 1979 or later. After his rehabilitation in 1979, Wang Meng has actively participated in literary and political circles. He has held several high positions in both circles. He served as Minister of Culture from May 1986 till September 1989. But after the June 4 Tian An Men incident in 1989, he has not

made any appearance. Wang Meng's fluctuating experience shows how a writer's fate can be closely tied to political events in China. Wang Meng's *A Young Man* and other stories are testimony to the existing social problems in China. Wang Meng, especially, should be credited for his being able to reflect those phenomena. The problem of bureaucratism addressed by *A Young Man* provides the reader a glance into social reality both in the 1950s and in present-day China. It raises the question of how to sustain the "revolutionary spirit" of the older Party members, and imbue that "spirit" to the generations to come. It poses the question of whether social problems can be effectively overcome within the existing socio-political order. These certainly remain great concerns in Chinese society. Wang Meng, who is more optimistic than his fellow writers, quotes one of his readers as saying that he is an "ever young revolutionary," and that he "still retain[s] the ardour, hopes and ideals of the early fifties."[2] He regards his early work as "revolution plus youth" and his recent writing "youth plus revolution"[3] — two identical ideals which he certainly has lived up to in both his early and recent work.

Wang Meng's artistic achievement in his post-Mao fiction is far greater than his earlier one. His experiments with language and the adoptation of Western techniques such as "stream-of-consciousness" have made his fiction among the most remarkable literature in contemporary China. A fitting prelude to his later literary achievement, Wang Meng's *A Young Man* is distinguished by its reflection of social reality in the 1950s as well as in present-day China.

Notes

1 Shao Quanlin in his "middle character theory" held that "The largest number at every stratum are those in the middle; to depict them is very important because the contradictions invariably are centered upon such people." See "Shao Ch'üan-lin and the 'Middle Character' Controversy" in Kai-yu Hsu ed. *Literature of the People's Republic of China*, 642-643.

2 Wang Meng, "My Exploration," *Chinese Literature* (Jan. 1981), 57.

3 *Ibid.*

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GLOSSARY

Ai Keen	艾克恩
Ai Wu	艾芜
baihua qifang, baijia zhengming	百花齐放，百家争鸣
Chen Qitong (Ch'en Ch'i-t'ung)	陈其通
Chen Yading (Ch'en Ya-ting)	陈亚丁
Chen Yunhao	陈允豪
Cong Weixi (Ts'ung Wei-hsi)	从维熙
Dai Hongsen	戴宏森
Du Lijun	杜黎均
He Jingzhi	贺敬之
Hu Jing	胡靖
Huang Qiuyun (Huang Ch'iu-yün)	黄秋耘
Jiang Guozeng	江国曾
Kang Zhuo (K'ang Cho)	康濯
Li Bin	李滨
Li Chang Zhi (Chang Zhi)	李長之（長之）
Li Qing	荔青
Li Xifan	李希凡
Lin Mohan	林默涵
Lin Ying	林穎
Liu Binyan (Liu Pin-yen)	刘宾雁
Liu Shaotang (Liu Shao-t'ang)	刘绍棠
Lu Le	鲁勒
Lu Dingyi (Lu Ting-i)	陆定一

Lu Xinhua	卢新华
Ma Feng	马烽
Ma Hanbing (Ma Han-ping)	马寒冰
Ma Wenbin	马文斌
Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung)	毛泽东
"middle character" (*zhongjian renwu*)	中间人物
Peng Hui	彭慧
Qin Zhaoyang (Ch'in Chao-yang) (He Zhi)	秦兆阳(何直)
"revolutionary spirit" (*geming jingshen*)	革命精神
Shao Quanlin (Shao Ch'üan-lin)	邵荃麟
Shao Yanxiang (Shao Yen-hsiang)	邵燕祥
Tang Dacheng (Tang Zhi)	唐大成(唐弢)
Tang Dingguo	唐定国
Wang Defen	王德芬
Wang Dongqing	王冬青
Wang En	王恩
Wang Meng	王蒙
Xi Rong	西戎
Xiao Yin	肖殷
Xu Kai	徐凯
"Yan'an spirit" (*Yan'an jingshen*)	延安精神
Yang Tiancun	杨田村
Yi Gen	一艮
yiqie jiu namo hui shi	一切就那麽回事
Zeng Hui	增辉
Zeng Zhennan	曾镇南

Zhang Baohua	張葆华
Zhao Jian	赵坚
Zhao Shuli	赵树理
Zong Pu	宗璞
Zhou Peitong	周培桐
Zhou Zhizhuo	周志卓